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*The History
of the Working Class
Movement in Hungary*

Corvina

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Introduction

The sensitivity of a small nation is a characteristic which members of large nations find difficult to understand. From the Western part of the continent "Eastern Europe" appears more or less homogeneous, just as the whole continent can, quite naturally, live in the minds of people overseas as a unit without clear distinctions. Yet—and this is also understandable—we Hungarians take exception when we are confused from afar with other, apparently similarly small peoples, described in a few clichés.

This is neither the place nor the occasion to dispel these fallacies, but we would like to point out a few facts, so that the reader who turns the pages of this book will have a better chance of understanding it.

The Hungarians reached their present homeland in Central Europe more than a thousand years ago, during the last phases of the Great Migrations; before that this area had been the centre of a number of nomadic empires which had been considerably larger than that of the Hungarians (e.g. the Hun and Avar empires). The states established by these earlier peoples vanished almost without a trace, yet the Hungarians survived apparently not so much because of their superior strength, but because of their well-developed capacity for adaptation. One of the probable reasons for this adaptability was that the Hungarians were not ethnically homogeneous even at the time of the conquest. This people, who spoke a language of Finno-Ugrian origin, and were Turkish in culture, abandoned nomadic ways and around the year 1000 established a Christian kingdom which was poised between the two world powers of the time: Byzantium and the Holy Roman Empire. The new state sought allies either among small East European states which were of the same size, or among states which were further away (Rome, France), thus avoiding subordination. Although Hungary was late, and at a disadvantage, in setting out on the course of feudal development, she made up for much of the time lost during the first five centuries of her history. The institutional system, and the material and intellectual culture of the country developed under the influence of Europe. Hungary (together with Poland) made up the Eastern marches of Gothic and Renaissance art. Protestantism played a large part in the development of Hungarian as a literary language, by way of sixteenth-century translations of the Bible and in particular of the metric psalms and the literature of religious controversy.

In the course of her history Hungary came close to complete annihilation more than once; for instance at the time of the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century. The Turkish occupation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which lasted about 150 years (and the continuous wars which accompanied it), seriously

depleted the population, and destroyed almost the entire cultural heritage of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, so that the country almost regressed to the state it was in at the time of the Great Migrations. While Hungary had about as many inhabitants as England in the late fifteenth century, and was almost homogeneous ethnically, by the time the Turkish occupation was over, and the succession of wars of independence waged against the Habsburgs ended in defeat, peace descended upon an almost depopulated country. After mass settlement by immigrants, it was only a few decades before the wounds caused by centuries of destruction were healed. During the eighteenth century, a period of quiet development, Hungary appeared to integrate with the organization of the Habsburg Empire. At the same time, ethnic homogeneity became a thing of the past and the larger towns became almost completely Germanized. Hungarians formed only a relative majority of the population up to the early twentieth century. At that time Europe almost forgot about Hungary, "discovering" the nation again only well into the nineteenth century, during the stormy years of what was known as the Reform Age, and even then only at the height of that period, in 1848-9.

The Revolution and the year-long War of Independence waged on behalf of bourgeois progress, and for national independence as a condition of that progress, made the Hungarian cause the cause of the progressive world. Marx and Engels, Garibaldi and Mazzini, Heine, Ibsen and Victor Hugo, the Polish revolutionary exiles, the English Chartists, Herzen and Chernishevskiy and the legions of Vienna University, all took the side of the Hungarians with words, deeds, and arms. The last issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* printed in red ink in May 1849 looked to the victorious Hungarian army as the last hope of the continental revolution. Victory, however, went to Habsburg might supported by Tsarist bayonets. The majority of the leaders of the revolution led by Lajos Kossuth went into exile followed by thousands of others who scattered all the way from the Ottoman Empire to Argentina and California with the intention of assembling again when a revolution, a struggle for liberty exploded, as it did in Cuba in 1852, or in the 1860 campaign of Garibaldi, or in Lincoln's army at the time of the American Civil War. Yet these exiles, true to their nature, did not cease in attempting again and again to overthrow Habsburg rule using every crisis of European politics to this end from the Crimean War and the establishment of Italian unity to the Austro-Prussian War.

In the autumn of 1849, using unbridled terror, Austrian despotism entrenched itself in Hungary. Hundreds were executed, the number of those imprisoned ran into thousands, and many thousands of the soldiers of the disarmed Hungarian army were conscripted into the Austrian army, and stationed, by way of punishment, in distant provinces of the Empire.

Yet even the absolute might of counter-revolution had to bow to the fact that it was not possible to sweep away many of the achievements of 1848, and in the first place the liberation of serfs (which not only gave freedom to all the peasantry, but also land to some of them). The Habsburgs were able to defeat the 1848-9 Revolution in the battlefield but not the political field. Indeed, the chances of doing so

deteriorated still further after the defeats of Solferino in 1859, and Königgrätz (Sadowa) in 1866. The leaders of the Empire were forced to conclusion that compromise with their most powerful domestic opponent was in their vital interest. The leading Hungarian political circle, the liberal nobility, understood on their part that only by compromise could they secure their political weight in society and the hegemony of Hungarians within the country; indeed the very existence of a historical Hungarian state between a united Germany and Tsarist Russia, within the framework of a weakening, yet still important Habsburg Empire depended on compromise. This mutual realization led to the 1867 *Ausgleich* (Compromise). The leading Hungarian political circle surrendered some important attributes of independent statehood, such as a separate territory for customs, foreign representation and an army (which were considered the "common" concern of the Empire), but nothing else limited their independence. The liberal laws introduced during the 1848 Revolution came into force again; Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria, was crowned King of Hungary. The ritual and ceremonies included an oath to maintain the Constitution supplemented by the Acts of 1848. As a token of reconciliation the exiles returned home—with the exception of Kossuth—and took part in domestic political life; the head of the first responsible government after the defeat of the Revolution was Count Gyula Andrássy, who in 1849 had been condemned to death in his absence by an Austrian court-martial. Only a few Members of Parliament chose to remember, or to remind others of the 1849 dethronement of the Habsburgs and they did not evoke much of a response. "Public opinion", reflecting the views of the liberal nobility and the more affluent urban citizens wanted to enjoy peace. The majority of those who hastened to the twin capital for the celebrations (the two cities separated by the Danube, hilly, more sedate Buda, and the more populous, more lively Pest on the plain were only united to form Budapest in 1873) felt that they were witnessing the birth of modern Hungary.

The Early History of the Working Class Movement in Hungary. The Activities of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary from 1890 to 1917

The Early History of Capitalism in Hungary

The late sixties of the nineteenth century signalled the beginning of the bourgeois era in the history of Hungary. The “overture” to the era was the 1867 Compromise between the Austrian and Hungarian ruling classes, which made peaceful capitalist progress possible. Austrian and West European capital hastened to penetrate what was virgin territory. Industrial enterprises were established by the dozen, the railway network was rapidly built, and the most important “product” of capitalist progress, the working class, soon came into existence.

How did the workers live in the heart of a country, where 80 per cent of the houses were of single-storey construction, and there were only eighteen four-storey buildings? Where most of the streets were unpaved, sewage and water supplies were rudimentary, and public transport was restricted to just a few horse-drawn omnibuses, while railway stations had yet to be built? And where plays were only performed in Hungarian at the National Theatre, for the language of society and culture was still mainly German?

What was the size of this working class, and to what degree were they aware of their historic task?

Although the number of industrial workers doubled by the late sixties (to nearly 300,000) compared to 1848, most of them were trained and worked initially in small workshops; thus their skills did not conform to large-scale production developing under capitalist conditions. For this reason the new factories imported their skilled labour from abroad, from provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and from Germany. The thousands of Austrian, Czech and German workers were better trained than their Hungarian counterparts not only in their industrial skills but also in politics. These “foreign trouble-makers”—as they were called in the political jargon of the time—together with young Hungarian journeymen who returned from years of apprenticeship abroad created an independent working class movement in Hungary.

The First Workers' Organizations

The first workers' organization came into being in Hungary—as the continuation of similar craft organizations—in the fifties and sixties of the eighteenth century. These were mutual benefit societies without any particular political complexion.

The nature of employment differed in the small workshops, which employed the majority of workers, and in large-scale industry. While working time exceeded twelve hours in the former, ten-hour shifts were customary in the few large factories. Skilled workers were relatively well paid in the manufacturing industry, but the situation of workers in small workshops who lived in a "family" relationship with their employers was shocking. Most of them were accommodated in the basement workshops, a practice general even at the turn of the century.

This situation gave rise to the workers' movement in Hungary. The first workers' organization of a socialist character, the Általános Munkássegylet (General Workers' Society) was formed soon after the Compromise, in 1868. In the autumn of 1869 another organization, the Pest-Budai Munkásképző Egylet (Pest-Buda Association for the Training of Workers), which had operated earlier under bourgeois control, also came under socialist influence, and the organization of trade associations began as well. Parallel with this, a working class press also came into being. The first public meeting of workers took place on 22 August 1869 in the capital city—preceded by a meeting on 29 March of Pozsony (now Bratislava) workers. To the applause of those present, the Red Flag of the socialists with the inscription "Workers! Unite!" was raised in the market-place in front of the Pest gas works. Bareheaded, those taking part in the meeting took an oath to the flag.

This ceremonial act was followed by the day-to-day work of organizing and agitation.

By and large three important ideological trends can be observed in the early working class movement in Hungary.

The memory of the 1848–9 Revolution and War of Independence was still fresh, therefore, the bourgeois left, which scorned the Compromise of 1867, was still able to exert strong influence on the workers. Although they rejected the idea of the political independence of the workers, they readily accepted the parliamentary representation of specific grievances. This not only meant the survival of revolutionary, democratic traditions, but also hindered the workers from becoming politically independent. It was the source of petty-bourgeois illusions concerning the solution of the "workers' question". The strength of the 1848 traditions is indicated by the fact that Mihály Táncsics, a veteran of the Revolution, a Utopian socialist, and a Member of Parliament, played a leading role in the General Workers' Society between 1868 and 1870. The reason why this co-operation was short-lived was that the young working class movement could not accept Táncsics's Utopian ideas, and he found himself unable to identify with the cause of scientific socialism.

The influence of Ferdinand Lassalle, the outstanding organizer and ideologist of the working class movement in Germany, was significant mainly as far as the more educated workers were concerned. As in Germany, Lassalle's views played a positive role in the establishment of independent workers' organizations in Hungary. However, the Hungarian followers of Lassalle paid little attention to the economic struggles of the workers—at least in the initial phase of their activities—since their spiritual leader was also convinced that strikes could not bring results under the conditions of capitalism.

There was a very strong link between the First International and the working class movement in Hungary. The founder and first president of the General Workers' Society, János Hrabje (1841-?), was a member of the executive body of the International, and worked in the domestic movement as chief delegate of that body. In 1869 Hrabje was succeeded in this office by Károly Farkas (1842-1907), whose agitprop and organizing work greatly contributed to the strengthening of Marxist ideology in the working class movement in Hungary.

The working strength of Marxism was evident in the development of the movement as a result of the Paris Commune. The activities of the General Workers' Society gained new impetus in the wake of the news from Paris. New trade associations and branches were formed in Budapest and in the provincial centres.

Strikes reached a level which had never before been experienced; contemporaries—friend and foe alike—attributed this to the effect of the Paris Commune. The upholsterers, brewers, iron workers, railwaymen, tailors and bakers all came out on strike. The number of striking workers reached about 6,000 in Budapest (about fifteen per cent of the capital's workers). The strikes did not explode spontaneously, the initiating and guiding role of the General Workers' Society was evident in all of them. The May 1871 strike of the Budapest tailors and bakers, in which 3,000 journeymen took part, was outstanding in view of the militant spirit shown in the context of the fight for higher wages. Since this was the first time strikers resorted to violence against strike-breakers, and the masters who did not want to come to an agreement, the police arrested fifty-two journeymen, including the strike leaders. Protesting against the police measures, the strikers entered the Parliament building on 8 May 1871—astounding the ministers and members who were assembled there. Waving placards inscribed "Bread and Justice!" the demonstrators could only be driven out of Parliament by police. Later the bakers, who came out in support of the tailors, clashed with the municipal police on a number of occasions. Terrified by the strikes and disturbances, one liberal paper went so far as to state that the Parisian Party of the "Red Flag" could be seen in Pest, when it wrote that "the Red Flag with the inscription: Workers! Unite!" was raised in one of the working class districts.

News of the defeat of the Commune shocked, but did not break, the Hungarian workers. Outwitting the official ban, socialist leaders paid tribute to the memory of martyrs, who had fallen in defence of the first workers' state; they held a meeting of workers on 11 June 1871, where they spoke with particular warmth of Leó Frankel (1844-96), a Hungarian leader of the Commune, whom they believed to be dead. After the meeting some 500 workers wearing the black ribbon of mourning in their hats marched through the city cheering the new, general revolution. This action was the final spur in the government's decision to take a strong line against the young movement. A few days later almost all of the leaders of the socialist workers' movement were arrested, the office of the General Workers' Society was closed, and their records were seized. As well as this, the homes of several hundred workers were searched, and some of them were taken into custody for a short period. The Public Prosecutor's office indicted twenty-eight of them charging them

in the first place with treason and the intention of establishing a "communist republic".

Even the liberal bourgeois press joined in the protest against the terror, criticizing the long investigation — the people charged spent six to ten months on remand — and some members even spoke in Parliament in defence of those charged.

The reaction of the public and the flimsiness of the evidence prompted the court to dismiss the charges of treason in the case of all the accused. The moral victory represented by this verdict enabled the working class movement in Hungary to overcome persecution and to reinforce the achievements of the progress made in spring 1871 organizationally. The influence of Marxism increased, and — even though the 1873 attempt to form a political party foundered owing to the official ban — the workers' newspaper survived, and was to a certain extent, substitute for a party as a "collective organizer and canvasser". The trade societies also remained intact and survived the repression. This basis secured the continuity of the independent working class movement from which under more favourable conditions, the Social Democratic Party and the trade union movement eventually developed; both were imbued with the spirit of class struggle.

The seventies and eighties were a period of gathering strength. The return home of Leó Frankel in 1876 was of particular importance from the point of view of the ideological-political development of the working class movement in Hungary. Frankel, a silversmith born in Óbuda, a "minister" in the Commune, and disciple and friend of Marx and Engels, regarded the establishment of a legal working class party as his main mission. Besides his organizing activities, he also wrote extensively in working class papers. He spread, and popularized the ideas of Marxism in his articles. As a result of the tireless work of Frankel and his associates, the General Workers' Party of Hungary was formed on 16–17 May 1880. The founding congress wanted to take the name Social Democratic Party, but was prevented from doing so by the standing official ban. The programme adopted by the congress — which envisaged public ownership of the means of production, and the establishment of a socialist society as the ultimate aim — made it clear that Marxism had penetrated the working class movement in Hungary deeply. In the face of the 1848 traditions, and the trend towards liberal mutual benefit societies, this fact only meant that Marxism became decisive among the politically active elements of Hungarian workers, then a small minority compared to the whole of the class. The ruling classes made their own judgement on Frankel's activities in the movement: they started a court case against him in the autumn of 1880, imprisoned him in 1881, and forced him to leave the country in 1883. After Frankel's departure, the party fell into the hands of the moderates. They tried to avoid prosecution by strict adherence to legality.

The Social Democratic Party of Hungary and its Programme

In 1889 the moderates were removed from their position as leaders with the help of the Second International, and the personal assistance of Leo Frankel. (Right until his death in 1896, Frankel was an outstanding leader of the Second International. Even though he had no direct contact with the Hungarian movement in the nineties, the Hungarian party was always proud of its former leader, and cherished his memory.) The new leadership of the party was headed by Pál Engelmann (1854–1916), a Marxist; they began the work of establishing an economic and political movement based on consistent Marxist foundations. Major landmarks in their work were: the 1890 May Day demonstration, in which 60,000 Budapest workers took part; the formation of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSzDP) on 7–8 December 1890 and the establishment of the Council of Trade Unions in 1891. The Declaration of Principles passed at the First Congress of the MSzDP, a document of the highest standards of the working class movement of the time, expressed the idea of the complete victory of Marxist ideology within the Hungarian movement. Engelmann and his associates recognized that the Hungarian movement could not confine itself to industrial workers in its agitprop and organizing work; the village proletariat also had to be enlisted in support of socialism. Under the influence of the activities of the MSzDP, an agrarian socialist movement developed in the south-eastern regions of the Great Hungarian Plain. The peasantry made a living there working as casual labourers at the great construction works of the era. This most mercurial and responsive section of the peasantry, which was also closest to the urban proletariat, acted as both the recipient and the enthusiastic distributor of socialist ideas in Hungarian villages. The end of 1896, and the beginning of 1897 saw the first socialist organizations come to existence in the larger centres in Békés, Csanád and Csongrád Counties in southern Hungary, in the shape of workers' societies, peoples, and readers' circles. The Hungarian ruling class, whose economic and political power rested on the system of large landed estates, watched the budding movement with understandable anxiety, and responded to their very first steps with merciless terror. Several peasants were killed in May and June 1897 at Orosháza, Békéscsaba and Battonya – victims of the brutality of the gendarmerie and the army. The government proclaimed a state of emergency, thus giving a free hand to the local authorities in the fight against the socialist. Harassment of this kind triggered the most significant action of the era, the Hódmezővásárhely riot of April 1897. When "order" had been restored, the leader of the movement János Szántó Kovács (1852–1908) and his twenty-six associates were given gaol sentences totalling thirty-seven years. The courageous, class-conscious behaviour of János Szántó Kovács in court created a national sensation. In his statement he argued for the transformation of village society, not by distribution, but by socialization of the large landed estates, and by collective farming of the land. The trial revealed how deeply socialism had struck root in the villages.

The growing intensity of the repression produced a series of crises and divisions

in the MSzDP. Engelmann had earlier been forced out of the leadership (and was to be forced out of the working class movement after the turn of the century). The leadership of the party tried to moderate peasant action, and retreated before the violence of the authorities. István Várkonyi (1852–1918) was expelled from the party together with a number of members of the executive who were in charge of the movement of the navvies. They in turn formed a new political body, the Independent Socialist Party.

Várkonyi was an odd figure. Formerly a navvy, he became an entrepreneur, a property owner in the capital, who—when he joined the General Workers' Party in 1889—made over the whole of his wealth to the movement. He was self-taught and in his thinking scientific socialism was mixed with anarchistic–Messianic views. Várkonyi and his followers set as their main aim the uniting of the agrarian proletariat and the smallholders. Their activities reached their peak in the 1897–8 peasant movements in the north-eastern counties of Borsod, Hajdú and Szabolcs, where demand for the distribution of large landed estates was made. When the movement was defeated, Várkonyi's party also lost its significance.

Workers' Living Conditions and the Working Class Movement in the Early Part of the Twentieth Century

The period following the turn of the century, which spanned almost twenty years, was of decisive importance for the working class and working class movement in Hungary.

Industrial progress was rapid in spite of the interruptions caused by crises and periods of stagnation; and in its wake the strength and composition of the working class changed. In the second decade of the twentieth century the size of the industrial labour force reached the million mark; the majority of industrial workers were employed in the manufacturing industry. The large-scale iron and engineering works had become the leading industries. The rapid rate of industrial progress did not, however, change the fundamentally agricultural character of the country. Those earning their living in agriculture still accounted for 64.5 per cent of the population in 1910. Estates of over 1,000 *hold* (1 *hold*=0.57 hectare) which were in the hands of 0.2 per cent of the landowners, accounted for 32.3 per cent of the agricultural land. There were three million agrarian proletarians, some 40 to 45 per cent of the active earning population.

The living conditions of the workers were substantially worse than in West European countries. The working day was one to one and a half hours longer while wages were 40 to 50 per cent less. Reports from industrial inspectors were full of accounts of unhealthy basement workshops even in 1910. Only 2 per cent of the 5,000 plants visited in 1910 had lavatories, and only 1.5 per cent had canteens. About a third of the workers in the capital lived in passable home conditions, about 30 per cent shared one room with four or five other people, and 36.3 per cent lived in doss-houses. Cave dwellings or—for the “fortunate”—“workers’

barracks", where eighteen to twenty people slept in one large room, were numerous outside the capital.

The strength and political weight of the organized, class-conscious core of the proletariat increased in parallel with the growth in working class numbers. Harassed by the authorities, the hard core of the movement, which had numbered only a few thousand, turned into a disciplined army, one hundred thousand strong, by the middle of the first decade of the century. Their actions filled the ruling class with justified anxiety. They stood at the gates of power at the end of this era, in 1917, and increased to several hundreds of thousands, thanks to the impetus given by the revolution.

It may seem an exaggeration to say that the MSzDP was the only modern political party in Hungary in the early part of this century, yet this is justified when one takes into account that the political structure of the country was reminiscent of that of early nineteenth-century England. The activities of the parties were limited to Parliament, members only met the masses at election time. Because of its organization the MSzDP was able to persuade hundreds of thousands of people to down tools, or take to the streets. This in fact happened on a number of occasions from 1905 onwards. There had never been a political force of this kind in Hungary before.

Significant credit for all this must go to the executive which came to lead the movement in the late 1890s, and above all to Ernő Garami.

Ernő Garami (1876–1935), a mechanic, was for twenty years (1898–1918) an acknowledged leader of the MSzDP. He came into contact with the socialist workers' movement during the early nineties, then went to Germany to improve his skills and his political knowledge. Soon he was publishing in the German socialist press. He became a member of the party executive in 1898, and the editor of *Népszava*, by then a daily, in 1905. *Népszava* was founded in 1877 and in 1880 it became the central organ of the Social Democratic Party. Garami believed that Hungary was in the process of bourgeois transformation, so he considered that the principal objective was to obtain universal suffrage and a secret ballot—in alliance with the bourgeois political forces.

The new leadership of the MSzDP was faced with two important tasks: the creation of a mass social democratic movement, and determining the position and role of organized labour in contemporary Hungary. The talented new leadership took successful steps to realize the first aim. They established national trade union organizations, imbued with the spirit of class struggle in the most important trades (iron, printing, building and timber industries). They increased the number of trade unionists, who were social democrat in tendency and were in close contact with the party, to over 40,000 by 1903, and more than 100,000 by 1905. Trade union membership remained more or less stable at that level until the outbreak of the First World War.

The struggles of the organized workers considerably improved the living conditions of the working class. They won wage increases and improved working

conditions, and in addition working hours were reduced to less than ten a day in most trades.

Within the Second International, the MSzDP mainly aligned itself with the German Social Democrats. The leaders of the party looked on themselves as followers of Kautsky; they applied to him for advice on several occasions, and translated a number of his works into Hungarian. They considered the maintenance of unity as most important in the debates of the international working class movement, and kept the party at a distance from revisionist, as well as revolutionary leftist, influences. Characteristically, neither the works of Eduard Bernstein, nor Rosa Luxemburg were published in Hungarian and of course the works of Lenin, which were available in German, were not translated either as they regarded him as a quarrelsome factionalist. In domestic politics while it never ceased to advocate the ultimate aim of socialism the party put the struggle for bourgeois democratic reforms in the forefront of its activities.

Although no revolutionary situation arose until 1917-18, this policy was developed by the MSzDP in a country where political crisis had been almost continuous since the beginning of the century; this was a result of the incomplete nature of the bourgeois democratic transformation, and the growing internal antagonisms within the ruling class caused by capitalist progress.

The 1903 Programme of the MSzDP

The basis of the party's activities—the programme agreed on at the Tenth Congress in 1903—expressed the trends characterized above. The introduction to the 1903 party programme gave a high-standard summary of the historical mission of the working class and the tasks of the party in a true Marxist spirit, emphasizing their international character. The programme set out a classless society, a socialist system of production and, as an indispensable condition for these, the conquest of political power as the ultimate aims of the struggle of the working class.

While admitting the importance of agitation, propaganda and the work of organization and mobilization, the programme emphasized that when it came to taking political powers in general any means which corresponded with the sense of justice of the proletariat could be used to further that end.

Under the social conditions in Hungary at the turn of the century, which they saw as fundamentally feudal, the leaders of the MSzDP did not consider the time ripe for the conquest of political power by the working class. They were well aware that Hungarian social conditions were backward in comparison not only with those in the capitalist countries of Western Europe, but also those in the more industrialized parts of the Austrian Empire. The leadership considered the establishment of a "modern" bourgeois democratic Hungary and the achievement of undisturbed capitalist development, to be the most important tasks of the MSzDP. They wanted to achieve these aims by peaceful means only, by way of reforms, excluding revolutionary means, even though the political structure of

Hungary had become increasingly rigid since 1867. This is the explanation why, besides demanding social and political reforms common to the international labour movement (eight-hour day, labour-safety laws, etc.), the programme of the party also demanded civil liberties, progressive taxation, separation of Church and State, and—first and foremost—universal suffrage and the secret ballot.

It is remarkable on the other hand how superficially and perfunctorily the programme handled two major problems of the Hungarian bourgeois transformation, and the most unresolved ones at that: the agrarian and national minority questions.

The 1848 Revolution and the 1867 Compromise did not touch on the system of large landed estates inherited from feudal times. Although about half the arable land passed into peasant ownership as a result of 1848, the other half was controlled by owners and tenants of large and medium-size estates. Capitalist conditions and the agrarian crisis which made its appearance at the end of the nineteenth century, created a scarcely endurable situation for the peasantry who had land, let alone the millions of agricultural workers. Large-scale emigration to the United States, which carried off about one and a half million people—mostly impoverished smallholders and agricultural labourers—could only offer a partial safety valve for the social tensions.

The national and national minorities question was also only solved in part by the Compromise. A generation of undisturbed progress strengthened the Hungarian ruling class, which wanted to modify the 1867 agreement to their own advantage. This was expressed in the demands which took shape in the early years of the century (separate customs territory, separate national bank, more vigorous development of the national character within the Austro-Hungarian army, etc.). These catchwords expressed not only the demands of a section of the ruling class, but also the wishes of the masses.

The liberal National Minorities Act of 1868 declared the equality of citizens regardless of their native language, but it turned a deaf ear to any kind of collective rights for minorities, and put into words the fiction of a united political nation. Even at the time of its enactment this Act did not satisfy the national minorities, who continued to demand their national rights with increased determination. The often narrow-minded resistance of the administration, which contravened even the 1868 Act on a number of occasions, and the agitation of the gutter press further exacerbated the situation. Capitalist progress also produced a separate bourgeoisie for each of the national minorities in the country, they did their best to win over the masses who for the most part were peasants, because of their own primary economic interests, turning them against the policy of the government. It was precisely around the turn of the century that the political mobilization of the national minorities began to make itself felt.

The whole of Hungarian society, or rather political public opinion, was concerned in these problems. It would therefore have been appropriate for the party of the workers to have attempted to give decisive answers to these questions, yet this was not done. In essence, the neglect of such fundamental questions prevented

the MSzDP from either uniting the most important social forces behind it or, at a later date, from forging a political alliance with the progressive political representatives of the peasantry and the national minorities. During the debates about the draft programme an opposition group emerged around Ervin Szabó (1877–1918), a scholarly librarian and a very effective Hungarian propagandist of Marxism. They had no fundamental disagreements with the 1903 programme. They also considered it natural that in countries, such as Hungary, where the majority of the masses were excluded from civic rights the struggle of the workers' party should be directed at the achievement of such rights, although Szabó had few illusions about parliamentarianism even in the early phase of his work. Around 1904–5, his main attention turned to questions where he was not satisfied with the socialist solution. In 1905 he suggested ideas similar to Lenin's for the solution of the national minorities question. In principle he considered the struggle of the oppressed nations of the Habsburg Empire to be of the same character as the nineteenth-century progressive national movements for Italian or German unity, or for Hungarian independence, and regarded giving them the right to self-determination as just as inevitable. Ervin Szabó was one of the inspirers of the social democratic agrarian programme recommendations published early in 1908. After giving an evaluation of the peasant movements in Hungary, the 1905 Russian Revolution, and the 1907 peasant revolt in Rumania, the draft programme wanted to utilize the revolutionary energies of the peasantry in the struggle for a bourgeois democratic Hungary. The draft programme therefore demanded the expropriation of all the large landed estates, and wanted the publicly owned estates to be handed over to those who cultivated them by way of cooperative and individual leases.

Ervin Szabó's group had only a small influence on the masses, and could not count on succeeding in opposition to the party leadership, who enjoyed the support of the trade unions.

The Struggle for Universal Suffrage

In January 1905 a political crisis erupted in Hungary. After being in power since 1867, the governing party lost their majority, and the opposition block, which was fighting for the revision of the 1867 Compromise, won at the polls. In order to force a compromise on the victors the king appointed an extra-parliamentary government, which promised to reform the suffrage, and by doing so won the support of the MSzDP and of the organized workers opposed to Parliament. The victors of January 1905, who wanted to modify the 1867 Compromise to the advantage of leading Hungarian circles compromised with the king under the threat of possible electoral reform. They relinquished their demands, and thus were able to form a government in 1906. Even this coalition government which held office between 1906–9 could not remove the question of electoral reform from the agenda. In the first phase of the struggle for the vote the MSzDP tried to exploit the divisions between the Austrian and Hungarian ruling classes in the

interest of electoral reform. Although the working class demonstrated their strength on a number of occasions during these years; they held huge demonstrations and organized a general political strike in 1908, and there were violent clashes on the streets in which the demonstrators frequently used arms—yet for the MSzDP the principal form of struggle was still the achievement of compromise. As a result of this, it was not the MSzDP which exploited the antagonism within the ruling classes, but the latter who used the party and its masses, and when the crisis abated the party made no headway. The sterile struggle produced a new opposition within the MSzDP. Gyula Alpári (1882–1944) and his faction, however, were not able to influence the leadership of the party, because they merely rejected the use of negotiations and pacts, and provided no other, useful option.

A new government, that is a new political leadership, gained office late in 1909. They carried out their conservative aims with ruthless consistency and supported the war preparations of the Habsburg Empire with all their might. The MSzDP joined the opposition which lined up against the policy of the government of István Tisza (1861–1918), and in April 1911 entered into a formal alliance with the left wing of the Independence Party which broke away to form an independent political body under the leadership of Gyula Justh (1850–1917) and Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955). Mihály Károlyi travelled a long road to the progressive camp. He began his political career as president of an organization to safeguard the interests of the large landowners. He joined the camp of those fighting for democratic change during the struggles for the vote in the 1910s. He was almost the only person in Hungarian political life who stood for parting company with the dominant German trend, and an approach to France and the Balkan states.

The political alliance between the Justh Party—an already existing group of radical intellectuals who had formed a party in 1914—and the MSzDP signalled the coming together of the democratic coalition which was to come into power in October 1918. The MSzDP represented the power of the masses in this alliance and the whole parliamentary opposition maintained loose links with it. But it was the mass of the workers who flooded the streets from time to time, who transformed parliamentary struggle into a real political fight. The 23 May 1912 demonstration, in which there were victims on both sides, almost developed into a revolution. Even though the police came out on top, the workers left the battlefield not as losers, but ready for the next round. The day of the baptism by fire, of the barricades, left a profound impression on friends and participants, and naturally, on the enemy as well.

However, the fact that the MSzDP, true to the tactics already developed, aligned its policy on national minorities in the new alliance with that of the strongly nationalistic Justh Party cast a shadow on that phase of the party's activities.

The nation-wide general strike planned for March 1913 became the closing act in the great political battle against the Tisza regime. The military preparations of the government frightened the parliamentary opposition, and the leadership of the MSzDP, lacking parliamentary representation and legal political support, did

not accept the responsibility for mobilizing the workers, and cancelled the strike at the last moment.

The workers were ready for battle, and the retreat gave rise to anger, and then disappointment, among them. From this time onward there was hardly any actual struggle against the legislative actions of the reactionary government. The workers grew tired of struggles for the vote which were adjusted to the needs of their bourgeois partners.

The onset of the economic crisis in the second half of 1912 which swept right across Europe added to the decline of the working class movement. By the end of 1913 the number of unemployed reached 100,000. Since there was no government unemployment benefit scheme only the trade unions helped the unemployed, using 30 to 40 per cent of their income for the purpose. The gravity of the situation was increased by the counter-attack of the government and the capitalists. Tisza announced that a new strike law was under preparation, and the plant closures, and lock-outs provoked by capitalists doubled in 1913 compared to 1912. It was in these conditions that in the summer of 1914 the war crisis came in the wake of the Sarajevo assassination of Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne. The First World War posed the biggest historical test for the European Social Democratic Parties—a test which most of them failed.

The MSzDP and the First World War

During the days of the war crisis the MSzDP struggled courageously for the cause of peace. The party denounced the imperialist, territory-grabbing policy of the Habsburg Empire as the cause of the crisis, thus incurring the anger of the powers that be. But the voice of protest broke in the last days of July when war was declared against Serbia, and a change to support of the war took place within the MSzDP as well. When the world war broke out—after the Russian declaration of war—the party press declared the justness of that war. It held that defence of the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and armed struggle against the opponents of the Central Powers, and above all against Tsarist Russia, served the interests of the country. Several factors contributed to the sudden change: the effect of the volte-face which occurred in the international social democratic movement; the weakening of the Hungarian working class movement; fear of the emergency laws which empowered the government to curtail the rights of combination and assembly, and the right to strike, as well as the introduction of summary jurisdiction, etc.; and fear for the territorial integrity of the Empire, and within that of Hungary. The danger of the disintegration of the Empire became a threatening reality with the outbreak of the war. The MSzDP considered that it could be damaging from the viewpoint of the working class, and argued for a united Empire. In their call to the organized workers on 29 July 1914, the leadership of the MSzDP emphasized that the political organizations, the trade unions and the

press "must be maintained at any cost," and as interpretation of the above, they added: "In a critical situation like the present one we must not make the work of the powers that be any more difficult." The national organizing committee of timber workers proclaimed in their 30 June 1914 resolution that: "No wages movement must be started during the war. The wage struggles in progress must be halted immediately."

The working class movement could not for long continue with a policy of class peace, for the management of the militarized factories posed a threat to the very existence of the organized working class movement in the strictest sense of the word by introducing disciplinary action and military conscription. On the other hand the price increases, food shortages and working conditions in the munitions factories dispelled the nationalist euphoria of even the most backward workers. From the end of 1914 on, there were a number of spontaneous working class actions, including hunger rebellions, in the capital city and in provincial industrial centres, and neither the party, nor the trade union movement could remain indifferent in the face of this change in atmosphere.

Letters sent by workers to *Népszava*, the newspaper of the social democrats, voiced dissatisfaction over support for the war, indeed during the debate at the 5 September 1915 National Conference of the party some leading party intellectuals, Zsigmond Kunfi and Zoltán Rónai for instance, publicly expressed their hostility to the policy pursued since August 1914. All of these signs indicated the need for a change of direction. So in the middle of the second year of the war the MSzDP was forced to modify its earlier standpoint.

The change was also expedited by certain external political considerations. Several of the party's leaders recognized the harmful nature of the one-sided German orientation of the country. Even an eventual victory would only have increased the German influence, which the majority of the leadership considered undesirable. From late 1915 articles supporting the war gradually started to disappear from the party press, and a yearning for peace began to be voiced, that expressed at first cautious, then increasingly bold criticism of the government.

During 1916 the MSzDP made efforts to restart the activities of the Second International in the interest of a compromise peace; they also expressed appreciation of the centrist-pacifist groups working in other parties.

The change in orientation was indicated by the progress of Zsigmond Kunfi in the hierarchy of the party. A former teacher with a lively mind, editor of the theoretical journal *Szocialismus*, Kunfi (1879-1929) sought new ways in the movement, even if he did not represent a political line divergent from Garami and the majority of the party executive. His pacifism increased his reputation in the party at this time (starting at the end of 1915).

The MSzDP played almost no role in internal politics during the first years of the war. The emergency laws allowed hardly any scope for legal activity on the part of the party. On the other hand, the importance of the trade unions increased and, exploiting the growing dissatisfaction of the workers they wrested numerous

concessions from those in charge of war production in 1915-16. The change came in 1917. Having come alive again under the impact of the February Russian Revolution, the working class movement made the party, reduced in strength and labouring under the burden of emergency powers as it was, an important factor in the political struggles which developed in the country.

Suddenly the war aims of the party seemed to be realizable. The Tisza government was overthrown. The head of the new government, Count Móric Esterházy (1881-1960), paid a personal visit to the secretariat of the party and invited representatives of the MSzDP to join the government (this was—rightly—rejected by the party leadership), and the new “suffrage government” committed itself to electoral reform. The number of organized workers increased to more than 210,000, about twice the pre-war strength, and about four times the 1916 level. Freedom of organization was in practice secured for all workers and employees. Hundreds of thousands marched through the streets on a number of occasions answering the calls of the party. The political aims of the party were, however, not in harmony with the wishes of the masses marching under the Social Democratic banner, and this soon became clear. The MSzDP continued to put the emphasis on the demand for universal suffrage, yet for the time being they even agreed to the programme of the “suffrage government”, which fell far short of that. For the masses, however, the primary target was immediate peace, and the demands for democratic liberties, for more goods in the shops and for better working conditions were only secondary. The rift between the aims of the party and the masses became particularly evident when in the autumn of 1917 the efforts of the party remained abortive. The policy of the reshuffled “suffrage government” shifted to the right; Sándor Wekerle (1848-1921), a well-known reactionary politician, became prime minister. He repudiated his own reform programme, then began to revoke the concessions the workers had won in the spring and summer of 1917.

No organized opposition developed within the MSzDP during the first three years of the war. The leaders of the party believed that during 1915-16 they had succeeded in wiping out the memory of their actions in support of the war home and abroad. Zsigmond Kunfi proudly said in early 1917 that the Hungarian party preserved its unity amidst the general division. Although the one-sided suffrage policy of the party, and the pacts made with bourgeois parties provoked much criticism at the April 1917 special congress of the MSzDP, the favourable political atmosphere of spring 1917 blunted criticism, even though the party tried to continue the very same policy which had failed in 1913.

Faced with the revival of the reactionary militarist powers, the failure of the foreign and domestic political aims of the MSzDP, and at the same time the stubborn adherence of the party leadership to the reformist suffrage policy, opposition activity within the party revived, but this time in an organized form.

Early in autumn 1917, an illegal anti-war organization, a faction of the Revolutionary Socialists, began activities under the ideological direction of Ervin Szabó. Within a few weeks these seekers of new ways were given an answer to the question

“What next?” On 8 and 9 November 1917 all the newspapers reported the victory of the Russian Revolution. In *Népszava* József Pogány explained what the victory of the Bolsheviks meant: “1. The dictatorship of the proletariat. 2. An immediate peace. 3. Socialization of the factories and the land.” Then he added: “What is taking place in Russia today is only the 1871 Paris Commune magnified to gigantic proportions.” And just as the best of the proletariat reacted at that time to the clarion call of Paris, so the demand “Let us talk and act as the Russians do!” burst from hundreds of thousands of organized workers in 1917.

The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Hungary. Formation and Activities of the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP) up till 21 March 1919

The Maturing of the Revolutionary Situation

The First World War entered its fifth year in August 1918. Millions of men clad in grey and increasingly tattered uniforms lay in the mud of trenches, and the caves of the Dolomites. The war which the German Kaiser Wilhelm II (1858–1941) had boastingly promised to finish victoriously by the autumn of 1914—by the time the leaves fell—had still not come to an end. The military losses of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in dead, wounded and prisoners of war were well in excess of a million, and even eighteen-year-old youths and men over fifty had already been called up. The final all-out effort of the armies, such as the June 1918 offensive in Italy which cost the lives of a hundred thousand Hungarian soldiers, did not bring a decision on the front. More and more soldiers were convinced of the senselessness of continuing the war. Even General Lukachich's firing squad could not stop the flood of desertions, acts of insubordination and mutinies. The public shooting of deserters aroused anger and hostility in the eyewitnesses, not fear. Deserters no longer tried to elude their pursuers on their own. In early September 1918 they formed bands, and returned fire when attacked; indeed, here and there, they went on the offensive.

The load-bearing capacity of the domestic front, the hinterland, was also close to breaking point. In 1914–17 the price of the most important food items and household commodities increased three- to sixfold and that of clothing ten- to fifteenfold, while wages and salaries won from the employers at the price of hard struggle increased only between one and a half and four times. Taking the other consequences of the war into consideration as well—the growing poverty and the rising crime and mortality rates—it was easy to see what kind of an explosion was about to take place in the depths.

The impending explosion was also signalled by the fact that organized labour was three times as powerful in 1918 as it was at the outbreak of the war. The political general strikes involving hundreds of thousands in January and June 1918 were also danger signs.

In January 1918 a strike movement, initiated by Austrian workers, started in support of the Russian Revolution and the peace offers of the Soviet government, and spread throughout the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After 17 January 1918 the strike gradually became a general one in Hungarian factories as well, and parallel with this left-wing socialists formed workers' councils, following the Russian example. In order to prevent the opposition from taking over

control through the council movement, which spread rapidly throughout the country, the MSzDP took over the leadership of the strike on the evening of the first day. But that same leadership declared the strike "victorious and at an end" on 20 January, after a declaration by the government which included some platitudes about peace. However, the resolution was only accepted by a small majority at a meeting of shop-stewards, which was made up of representatives of the organized workers, and which acted independently in matters of major importance as far as decisions of the executive of the party were concerned: work was not resumed in a significant number of the capital's factories. On 22 January the battle was still raging, speakers from the party executive, who advocated discipline, were angrily rejected by the workers. Following these events the executive of the MSzDP openly denounced the revolutionary socialists at a special congress on 10 February, and tried to make the work of the opposition impossible in both the party and the trade unions.

After a big battle the nascent workers' councils ceased to operate, since their existence was linked to the mass strike, and since court-martial proceedings were started against a number of left-wing working class leaders who were taking part in the council movement. The same fate met the revolutionary socialists, arrested on the eve of the strike, whose work was then taken over by the "second generation" of their group led by Ottó Korvin (1894-1919).

The political general strike which broke out on 20 June 1918, and was even larger than the previous one, was also of elemental strength.

At the time a minor strike for better wages was already in progress in the foundry shop of MÁVAG (Hungarian Iron, Steel and Engineering Works), a large, heavy industrial plant, which employed several thousand workers. The authorities wanted to "calm" the strike with a volley fired by the gendarmes. The "result" was four people dead and several seriously injured.

The bloodshed did not have the intended effect. Instead of returning terrorized to their work benches, the workers stormed out of the factory and marched towards the Parliament. Workers from nearby factories joined the marchers, and since the police prevented them from reaching their objective, the demonstrators, by then numbering several thousands, went to a nearby square to hear a speech by Dr. Jenő Landler (1875-1928), secretary of the Railwaymen's Trade Union, and leader of the left wing of the party. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the Iron Workers' Union wanted to moderate the atmosphere, but a conference of shop-stewards from factories in Budapest and nearby decided in favour of a general strike. Although a complete news black-out was ordered as early as 20 June, the strike spread right across the country. Nameless messengers of the workers' movement spread the news of the shootings. The outbreak of the strike in the provincial industrial centres demonstrably coincided with the arrival of trains from the capital. Just one day after the volley was fired at the MÁVAG factory there were already more than half a million on strike.

Mihály Károlyi, an outstanding leader of the opposition, and László Fényes spoke up in Parliament on behalf of the workers. They denounced the "sickening

outrage," and pointed out that the government had provoked the fight in order to break the trade union. József Szerényi, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, in essence admitted this in his answer. In his question to the minister, László Fényes pointed out that the government's policy of "trampling down" the organized workers was in the last resort condemned to failure; indeed the dissatisfaction of the workers would sooner or later join up with that of other sections of the working people and then "there will be a terrible cleansing in the country". But the powers that be turned a deaf ear, and met even the moderate demands of the strikers with violence. They arrested Dr. Jenő Landler, took some of the party and trade union leaders into custody, seized several hundred shop-stewards and conscripted them into the army, and banned several trade union journals. They also threatened to ban the trade unions and sequester their assets, and to introduce capital punishment for the strikers. The organizers of the strike therefore called it off after a week.

The Hungarian proletariat did not agree with the cancellation of the strike. Letters of protest flooded *Népszava*. In spite of all the threats, the strike continued in many factories, but no organized group as yet existed to wrench the management of the workers' struggle from the hands of the retreating party and trade union leaders.

Nevertheless, the events of the June 1918 strike—just like the January strike for peace—showed that the revolutionary energies of the working class had already transcended the traditional boundaries of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions.

By the end of September 1918, military defeat had become undeniable and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary began. National councils were formed in the centre of the different national minorities in Ljubljana, Prague and Zagreb. Hungarian political groups, which offered programmes of peace, national independence, and bourgeois transformation necessarily took the same course. Although the leading groups of the Hungarian ruling class admitted their political bankruptcy, they did not want to draw the necessary conclusions. In opposition to a political leadership which could not be removed by constitutional means, the leaders of the Social Democratic Party, the Károlyi Party—which had separated from the Independence Party in 1916—and the Radical Party, formed a Hungarian National Council on 25 October 1918. At that time the parties represented in the National Council still hoped for a peaceful solution, and expected that the king would ask Mihály Károlyi, the leader of the camp in favour of democratic transformation, to form a government; but the intrigues of the representatives of the old regime made this impossible. While the leaders of the National Council were waiting for the attempts at a solution by the reactionary forces to fail, new forces appeared on the stage.

By then the various groupings of left-wing socialists were working in close co-operation. They presented an independent programme at a party meeting on 13 October 1918, where Zsigmond Kunfi, expressing the opinion of the party executive, rejected the "Soviet course" as untimely. Representatives of the left quickly linked up with the work of the Soldiers' Council formed on 25 October.

Lieutenant Béla Szántó, one of the representatives of the left-wing socialists, who subsequently became known as the chief of staff of the revolution, played a particularly important part in this. Left-wing socialists also joined in the activities of the National Council, the offices of which were managed by Dr. Jenő Landler, who had meanwhile been released from detention.

The Triumph of the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution

The revolution began almost spontaneously in the last week of October. There was a student demonstration in the Budapest Castle District on 25, which the police dispersed. Young demonstrators broke the official seal barring the premises of Galileo Circle, an organization of progressive students, which had been closed in January 1918. Count István Tisza, the leader of the reactionaries was blind to what was happening and continued to show his lack of perspicacity by describing these events as the misbehaviour of a few unbridled Jewish youths; but by the very next day it was obvious that far more was involved. A hundred thousand people demonstrated on 27 October in favour of the National Council in front of Parliament. Mass meetings outside the headquarters of the Károlyi Party became a regular feature. The "Battle of the Chain Bridge", as it was called, began at one of these meetings on 28 October. The first permanent bridge linking Buda and the centre of Pest, completed in 1849, was the shortest route to the Royal Palace on the Buda side. The police attacked demonstrators marching towards the Castle Hill District and demanding that Károlyi should be appointed prime minister; three demonstrators died, sixty-five were wounded. The next day half-hour protest strikes were held in all the factories of the capital, and arming the workers began. Masses of workers inspired and led by left-wing socialists marched to the various barracks, and swore brotherhood in arms with the soldiers. The majority of the soldiers stationed in Budapest and around the capital deferred to the authority of the Soldiers' Council. Panic-stricken at the public uproar, on 29 October the capital's police force declared that they sided with the National Council.

The left wing wanted to give the events as decisive an impact as possible. They held a conference on 27 October at the premises of the Union of Employees attended by every faction of the left-wing opposition in the Social Democratic Party; Béla Szántó, one of the leaders of the Soldiers' Council, was also present. Having discussed the political situation, the conference resolved that an armed uprising would be staged on 4 November. A series of factory meetings on 30 October urged that a Budapest Workers' Council be formed immediately, indicating the readiness for battle of the workers. Therefore the even more comprehensive meeting of the opposition on 30 October went a step further and resolved that a general strike be called for 1 November, but the revolution outpaced even this.

On the evening of 30 October even the most resolute members of the National Council believed that "several more days of propaganda and organization were still needed" for a revolution. But before that the bomb had exploded. A handful

of troops loyal to the National Council took possession of the headquarters of the city command. At the Eastern Railway Station demonstrating soldiers and workers prevented two companies of recruits from being sent off to the front. Other demonstrators freed the political prisoners in military gaols including leaders of the revolutionary socialists. In the course of the uprising demonstrators took over the Post Office, the telephone exchange, military depots, bridges and other strategic points. In the barracks and on the gunboats of the Danube flotilla soldiers and sailors disarmed officers loyal to the regime. The trains were stopped in response to an appeal by Landler and his associates. The railwaymen thwarted attempts to bring regiments loyal to the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Budapest.

The revolution had begun, but its outcome was by no means certain. Only about 150 soldiers were stationed around the headquarters of the National Council at the Astoria Hotel in the city centre, and organized military power did not appear to be growing. Many of the leaders of the revolution dispersed in the ominous silence, and only a few social democrat and radical politicians remained with Mihály Károlyi to await the arrival of General Lukachich, the commander of Budapest and the Bosnian regiment he commanded, which was reputedly loyal to the government. (In order to minimize the possibility of mutinies, the military leadership of the Empire garrisoned Bosnians in Budapest, Hungarians in Prague and so on.) The next morning, however, the marchers in the streets were not the troops of the counter-revolution, but the most formidable force of the revolution, organized labour. Left-wingers working at the editorial office of *Népszava* published mobilizing leaflets in the name of the party leadership, which were distributed early in the morning together with *Népszava* itself. This force decided the battle. Archduke Joseph of Habsburg, who had remained in Budapest as the king's representative, called on the leaders of the National Council to meet him in the early hours, and advised them that the king had appointed Count Mihály Károlyi as prime minister. At that point the leaders of the revolution felt themselves to be victorious, but the masses were of a different opinion. Replacing those at the helm was not enough for them, and from the very first hours the demand for a republic sounded all over the city—inspired in particular by the revolutionary left wing—and the new government which took office was no longer the cabinet of His Majesty.

In the first hours of the new regime questions emerged for the leaders and masses alike: did the glorious days of late October mean the beginning or the end of the revolutionary process; what kind of revolution had been won on 31 October 1918; could this new regime be consolidated; would the masses, the workers and soldiers, who had achieved the victory, be content with a bourgeois democracy?

The victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution—symbolized by the white flowers of autumn, the Michaelmas daisies the demonstrators wore in their button-holes, and with which soldiers used to replace the Imperial and Royal rosettes cut out of their caps—created an unprecedented national unity. For a moment it seemed as if landowners, prelates, capitalists, indeed even members of the Hungarian branch of the dynasty, who quickly swore allegiance to the new

regime, were in the same camp as the workers and the peasant soldiers who had carried through the revolution. This unity was patently illusory, since the principal reason for the attitude of the ruling classes was that they regarded the new regime both as regards foreign as well as domestic politics—as the lesser of two evils. They thought that rapid consolidation would make it easier for them to survive the inevitable revolutionary transformation, and were convinced that a government professing a friendly attitude towards the Allies would win the support of the victors in establishing domestic order and extricating the country from the war, and would lead to a tolerable peace treaty.

National unity appeared to be firm; the government rejoiced in this illusion and did their best to show firmness towards those on the left who wanted to disturb the “Peace of God” established under the aegis of the Michaelmas daisy, either by spontaneous revolutionary behaviour or deliberate actions.

At a meeting on 1 November 1918 Zsigmond Kunfi, a minister in the first Károlyi government, and a pillar of the centre of the Social Democratic Party, branded as counter-revolutionaries those who, whatever their slogan was, wanted to raise the idea of a social upheaval here and now, “which would make our great work impossible”. He concluded his speech with words which were characteristic of the mood of the Michaelmas Daisy Revolution: “I, a convinced Social Democrat, find it difficult to say, yet I do say it, that for the next six weeks the time stipulated for convening the constituent convention to settle the constitutional form under appropriate parliamentary conditions we do not wish to use the weapon of the class struggle.”

Count Tivadar Batthyány, the Minister of Home Affairs, in a statement about the revolution—even the title of which, the “White Revolution,” was characteristic—made at much the same time, stipulated that the revolution and its programme must be guarded against violence and bloodshed adding emphatically: “We must put down any attempts which could throw even the least shadow on these historic days.” Márton Lovászy, Minister for Church Affairs and Education, expressed himself even more clearly: “As far as the future is concerned, our principal task is to conclude a peace treaty, to solve the problem of the national minorities, and to safeguard the integrity of the country’s territory. Added to these tasks is a mission of major importance: to save the country from the perils of Bolshevism. It is Hungary’s duty to stem the tide of Bolshevism....” What Lovászy summed up in his statement represented in reality the minimal programme for consolidation, and also made clear the objective and reason for the desired process.

The government signed an armistice with the victors in the spirit of consolidation, but this also gave rise to the first disappointment, for it became clear that the friendship felt by the government for the Allies was one-sided and not reciprocated. This gradually set the ruling classes against the government, since it failed to secure a smooth transition from war to peace, and the territorial losses suffered damaged their class interests. They also found the bourgeois democratic reforms went too far since there was nothing to counter-balance them. The fiasco of the government’s foreign policy also influenced the mood of the working classes, but it

had the opposite effect: revolutionizing them as the spring of 1919 was to demonstrate it.

An urgent decision was needed on the form of government to be adopted in the interests of consolidation. Parliament—elected in 1910—proclaimed its own dissolution on 16 November, and so did the Upper House, handing over their powers to the Greater National Council, which acting in the role of a constituent national convention, was enlarged to 500 members. Supported by the consent of more than 200,000 people assembled outside Parliament, the Greater National Council passed a “People’s Decree” proclaiming a Republic. The “People’s Decree” stated that “Hungary is a self-governing Republic independent of any other state.” This formally established the existence of an independent, democratic Hungary born of the October Revolution. The “People’s Decree” also committed the government to passing popular laws concerning:

- “a) universal, secret, equal and direct suffrage regardless of sex at parliamentary, county and municipal elections;
- b) the freedom of the press;
- c) people’s jurors;
- d) freedom of association and assembly;
- e) allocation of land to those who tilled it;

and provision for the immediate enactment of these laws.”

The People’s Law concerning the Republic more or less summarized the maximum programme of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The leaders of the revolution thought that they had offered everything they could to the masses, and they had no task other than to implement this programme. For this reason the National Council published leaflets about the completion of the revolution and the restoration of order on the day after the revolution; and for this reason Ernő Garami, the leader of the Social Democratic Party and a minister in the coalition government, said on 16 November that there was only one single task: “to work, work and work”.

Those he addressed, the people who had helped the bourgeois democratic government to power did not share this opinion.

The flames of a peasant revolution flared up in the villages in the first days of November. The hastily set up demobilization centres could not disarm the hundreds of thousands of soldiers flooding back from the front, thus tens of thousands of fire arms found their way into peasant homes in the villages and hamlets. They were not left idle for long.

The first objects of the people’s anger were the representatives of the old administration: the village notaries and the gendarmes; they were the first with whom those who returned and those who had suffered at home too, wanted to settle accounts—for the sufferings caused by the brutality of the gendarmes, and for the abuse of call-up papers and the distribution of war allowances.

The animosity of the people drove about a third of the village notaries out of office. In many places the gendarmes were also attacked. As a rule, the peasants were content to disarm them, or perhaps to set their station or barracks on fire.

Usually the disarmed gendarmes were not harmed, unless they resisted, when they were driven away or killed.

Some Hungarian teachers and priests were also driven away, and in a few cases killed, in areas inhabited by other nationalities, for they were seen as the representatives of national oppression.

Attacks were also made against the village representatives of capitalism, the merchants and innkeepers, and they could consider themselves lucky if they only lost their stock.

Peasants emptied the granaries belonging to the large landowners right at the beginning of the movement; later they carried off their animals. They made up for the meat shortage caused by the war killing the deer in the deer-parks, and the fish of the fish-ponds. At that time no attempt was yet made to occupy or distribute the land. The majority of the peasants were waiting for the government to take the initiative, for a national settlement of the problem, but demands for this were frequently expressed even during November.

Even the left-wing press denounced the peasants, regarding them as sullyng the purity of the revolution, and urged strong steps against them. Repression was not general, since the government and the local authorities lacked a sufficiently powerful police force for this, but where repression did occur it was extraordinarily violent. Special hastily formed squads, mainly consisting of officers, restored order by killing several hundred peasants.

The opinion of workers concerning the consolidation of the bourgeois democratic order was demonstrated unequivocally by the slogans voiced at a public meeting organized for the proclamation of the republic. Workers from the large factories carried banners in the 16 November march, putting forward demands which went well beyond the programme of the bourgeois democratic revolution: "Long live the Social Democratic Republic! We demand nationalization of all large plants!"

In another development, a telegram arrived from Moscow, dated 3 November 1918, signed by Lenin, Sverdlov and Kamenev, greeting the workers, peasants and soldiers for their victory over the Austro-Hungarian Empire. "Our hearts throbbed"—said the message—„when we heard the news that you took the cause of peace into your hands, that you set out on the course that led to the destruction of the old imperial bureaucracy, and the expulsion of Charles Habsburg, that you would proclaim the socialist government and establish the councils of worker and soldier delegates. We salute these councils in whose hands the power will rest tomorrow." The message expresses the conviction that "Workers, soldiers and peasants of Hungary liberated themselves from the power of the Viennese bureaucracy and Viennese capitalists not to let themselves be exploited by Hungarian landowners, bankers and capitalists." The telegram was similarly addressed to the other nationalities in the empire encouraging them in their struggle against the oppressors. "We are deeply convinced"—continued the message, „that when the German, Czech, Croatian, Hungarian, Rumanian, Slovak workers, soldiers and peasants assume power and accomplish the work of national liberation, they

will conclude a fraternal alliance of free peoples, and overcome the capitalists with joined forces..." The Moscow greeting inspired the revolutionary forces in the struggle for the socialist revolution. It called upon the workers, soldiers and peasants of the collapsing Habsburg Empire to win power for the councils and to conclude an alliance with the peoples who had established Soviet power.

Neither the government, nor the MSzDP wanted to publish Sverdlov's telegram which suggested the option of a socialist solution to the national problem. Ottó Korvin, a revolutionary socialist, came to hear of the telegram and the plan to suppress it. Leaflets exposing the manœuvres to suppress the telegram and hailing the socialist republic were distributed among the masses who on 16 November celebrated the birth of the Republic in front of Parliament in the name of national unity. After that, *Népszava* had to publish the telegram, even though it did so with a disapproving commentary.

On the one hand, a republic which was essentially bourgeois as far as its programme was concerned, with the adjective "popular" tacked on it; on the other hand, opposed to this were the red leaflets demanding a socialist republic. These were the two courses which not only the masses gathered in front of Parliament had to choose between but the whole country.

Formation of the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP)

On the day which was meant to be a festival of national unity, a break in the lines of the revolutionary camp signalled the beginning of a new phase, one in which paths would diverge; and naturally the forces of the left kept looking towards Soviet Russia. Those who veered towards the left in the revolution, and who did not want to settle for a bourgeois democracy were searching each other out almost from the first moment of victory in order to set up some kind of centre to take over guidance of the mass movements. Today it is impossible to reconstruct their deliberations and the discussions of the time. Only a few leaflets, newspaper articles, and statements have survived to indicate what was going on in their minds, and what was the relation of the left to the political programme of the coalition government. Thus we know that the revolutionary socialists published a pamphlet demanding a socialist republic and that Dezső Somló (1884-1923) established the Independent Group of Hungarian Socialists. We also know about the organization of the Marx Circle, a centre of ideological guidance independent of the MSzDP; this was renamed after Ervin Szabó, the spiritual leader of the left-wing opposition, who had died on 30 September 1918, since his name was a more suitable banner for the opposition to the MSzDP, who also quoted Marx as their authority. A rugged character of the left, Béla Szántó, who played an important part in the victory of the Michaelmas Daisy Revolution as one of the leaders of the Soldiers Council, raised his voice against ending the revolution early in November and outlined perspectives for the future which were not at all similar to the ideas of the coalition parties. Lajos Kassák, a progressive writer, who

stood on the extreme left of literary life, published a "Manifesto for a Communist Republic" illustrated with lino cuts by Sándor Bortnyik, in the first issue of his journal *MA* (Today); dedicated to ideological issues it appeared just after the success of the bourgeois revolution, and as it were, in answer to the irresolute reform programme of the coalition, published the first Soviet Constitution of 1918.

The day after the bourgeois democratic republic was proclaimed the leaders of the left held a conference. They decided not to break organizationally with the MSzDP for the time being, and to rest content with a centre of ideological guidance, the Ervin Szabó Circle. News was received during these discussions that Béla Kun had come home. Kun (1886–1939), who had been a member of the MSzDP since 1902, was widely known, even before the war, as a lighting leader of the labour movement in Transylvania. During the war he was taken prisoner in Russia, and became more widely known for his activities after 1917. His name and person were inseparably linked with the Russian Revolution since he was the military and political leader of about a hundred thousand soldiers, recruited from the ranks of Hungarian prisoners of war, who came out in support of the cause of the revolution.

When news of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire reached them, Hungarian communists active in Soviet Russia held a conference in Moscow. At a second conference on 4 November 1918 (the success of the Michaelmas Daisy Revolution was already known by then) they proclaimed the foundation of the Hungarian Party of Communists, and also resolved that several hundred activists should return to Hungary to establish the new revolutionary party in fact with the aid of the Hungarian political left.

After an adventurous journey in which he used forged identity papers, Béla Kun was among the first to reach Hungary.

The arrival of Kun brought a change in the attitude of the political left. Kun and his group had acquired thorough theoretical knowledge and a wealth of fighting experience in the Russian Revolution. While the ideas of the Hungarian political left were undeveloped, those who came home from Russia had a definite programme and organizational ideas. Kun argued for an organizational break with the social democrats and the establishment of a new, revolutionary workers' party, which set as its direct aim the establishment of the power of the councils, and the further development of the bourgeois democratic revolution into a socialist one. Kun's first appearance gave rise to antipathy even among the political left, although they listened to his experiences in Russia with great attention. In spite of this, Kun carried on with his negotiations to form a new party. "I talked with twenty or thirty people daily"—he wrote later. The negotiations were not limited to members of the opposition, but extended to every leader of the social democrats thus to Jenő Landler and Zsigmond Kunfi—and to everybody else whom Kun presumed to be even the slightest bit left-wing, since he wanted to set up a mass party, and not a sect. But these people declined his invitation to join.

At the same time a virtually endless series of discussions took place between the various opposition groups and those returning from Russia in coffee-houses, at

private homes and in workers' organizations. Finally the repatriates succeeded in winning over the majority to the idea of forming a new party; so on the afternoon of Sunday, 24 November 1918, forty people gathered in a private home to hold the foundation meeting of the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP). A resolution about the formation of the new, revolutionary workers' party was passed at the meeting, and its first Central Committee was elected. It consisted of Ede Chlepkó, Rezső Fiedler, János Hirossik, Ferenc Jancsik, Ottó Korvin, Jenő László, József Mikulik, Ernő Pór, József Rabinovits, László Rudas, Ernő Seidler, Béla Szántó, Béla Vágó and Károly Vántus. Béla Kun was elected President of the Central Committee. Tibor Szamuely (1890–1919), who arrived home early in January 1919, was later co-opted onto the party leadership.

The composition of the leadership of the new revolutionary party demonstrated the co-operation between all the revolutionary forces who in the autumn of 1918 were ready to follow the example of October 1917, to adopt the Soviet–Russian example autonomously, and to fight out the socialist revolution in Hungary. The group of former prisoners of war who had taken part in the battles of the Russian Revolution and the civil war, and who even before that had been respected leaders of the working class movement in Hungary, the “old,” pre-war left-wing social democrats, the revolutionary socialists and the workers who had led the 1918 mass political strikes were all represented in the party.

The bulk of the social democratic left, however, did not join the communists at the start. They were held back by anxiety about the unity of the party, and they also considered that the “old” party offered better opportunities for the realization of left-wing policy, since the majority of the working class aligned themselves during the 1917–8 revolutionary upsurge behind the MSzDP and the trade unions under its guidance. Their illusions and hopes were perhaps most accurately expressed in the writings of Ernő Bresztovszky, translator of the “International,” and Swiss correspondent of *Népszava*. Bresztovszky made contact with Soviet–Russian diplomats in Switzerland late in 1917. He did his best to supply information received from the Russians and the Hungarian Communist ex-prisoners of war to readers of *Népszava* and attempted to act as a link between Moscow and Budapest, the Hungarian movement and the former communist prisoners of war, since he sincerely sympathized with them.

Bresztovszky tried to convince his communist friends that “the only intact organizations in the country, the party and the trade unions, must not be sacrificed,” but at the same time he sharply attacked the leadership of the MSzDP branding their activity in the coalition government as “procuring a miscarriage in respect of the socialist society which was about to be born”.

In spite of the well-intentioned warnings, the anxieties, and the hostile carping the break between the revolutionary and the reformist wings of the workers' movement did in fact occur.

For a few days the public knew almost nothing about the historic event. The Social Democratic Party built a wall of silence around the new party, since the old leaders hoped to the very end that Béla Kun's endeavour would end in failure,

and the "prodigal sons" would ultimately return to the MSzDP. In a vaguely worded account the 1 December 1918 issue of *Népszava* reported the 29 November closed meeting of the Workers' Council. According to the article, Ede Chlepkó rose to speak on a point of order, then the majority of the Council declared in favour of maintaining the unity of the party, and supporting the coalition government. The contemporary reader could hardly comprehend from this piece of news who it was that threatened the unity of the Social Democratic Party and the government, but we know today that Ede Chlepkó, a member of the KMP Central Committee had announced the formation of the Hungarian Party of Communists to the Workers' Council. A few additional, but still rather restricted public appearances followed. At the founding meeting of Young Workers' National Federation on 30 November a member of the KMP, Sándor Krammer, submitted a draft resolution hailing the idea of a proletarian dictatorship, which was accepted by the meeting. Another member of the KMP Central Committee, József Rabinovits, welcomed the meeting in the name of the communists. Communists also rose to speak at the debates organized by the Galileo Circle on the land question; then on 4 December Béla Kun appeared before a large meeting of workers and spoke of the Russian Revolution.

In spite of the paucity of public statements, the public sensed that something had happened. The bourgeois press suddenly began a vehement attack against Bolshevism. The papers published the most absurd and alarming stories about the introduction of free love, the annihilation of culture, and terror in Russia.

But the voice of interest and friendship was also raised in the *Szabad Gondolat* (Free Thought), a journal which reflected the ideas of the Galileo Circle, and in the pages of Kassák's journal, *MA*.

The news black-out was successfully broken early in December, and the new party was able to start communicating its ideas. The first communist demonstration was seen on the streets of Budapest on 6 December, and on 7 *Vörös Újság* (Red News) was published informing the public at large about the objectives of the communists.

The reason why the formation of the party and the establishment of the paper was not synchronized was that the Social Democratic Party, jealously guarding its position in the working class movement, wanted to delay and hinder the publicity work of the new proletarian party even though it was unable to prevent it from being founded. Using the right-wing printers' trade union, the social democrats tried to make it impossible for the KMP to find anyone willing to print their paper. They almost succeeded, since the closed shop was more or less general throughout the printing trade, and the trade union was respected even by the employers. Ultimately a small workshop was found to print the first issue of the paper. Leaders of the new party operated the antiquated press by hand: Béla Kun, Béla Szántó, Ottó Korvin, Béla Vágó, and their associates were the party's first printers.

Even the headline of the inaugural leader (Class War!) heralded a programme which differed radically from that of the coalition government. The article drove

home the point that capitalism was ripe for defeat, that the time to realize socialism had arrived, but that the social democratic parties were incapable of leading the working class in that struggle. "The worker who only reads *Népszava* has not even an inkling that the decisive hour is here," wrote *Vörös Újság*, "the hour in which a new world, the world of socialism, his world, is being born amidst terrible pain, since according to *Népszava* and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party the revolution has already succeeded. . . . This is why we, Hungarian communists, stand before Hungarian workers to prepare them for the new proletarian revolution which will necessarily come, indeed, which has already arrived."

These were the inflammatory words which informed the public, friend and foe alike, that the socialist revolution was already represented in Hungary by an organized force demanding the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the Russian example should be followed. And this force, the Hungarian Party of Communists, irrevocably exploded onto the Hungarian political and social scene.

The revolutionary party built up its organizations first and foremost among the rank and file of the working class. The young party had very considerable bases in the trade unions—among the metalworkers, chemical industry workers, clerks, and also in the new organizations formed during the revolutionary fervour towards the end of the war—among the industrial and transport clerks, engineers, teachers and public servants. During December 1919 the KMP succeeded in securing freedom to agitate within the trade unions in spite of the opposition of the MSzDP.

Communist groups were organized late in 1918 and early in 1919 in most of the trade organizations. The attempts by the social democrats to oust communists not only from the Budapest Workers' Council but also from the trade unions, failed. This was as a result of the trade union policy not only of some old, left-wing former social democrats, but also of Béla Kun, who had returned from Soviet Russia. The essence of this policy was that the new revolutionary party could not hold itself aloof from the trade unions, which embraced the masses of the workers. No matter that their leadership supported the reformists, they must not be conceded to the social democrats. The communists had to struggle from within to get their policies accepted, and to win over the class organizations which enjoyed particular respect and influence in Hungary. The importance of this policy can really be appreciated in the light of Lenin's critique of "left-wing communism" and the peaceful victory of the March 1919 revolution. It played a decisive part in ensuring that when the historic moment arrived, the whole of the organized working class was able to undertake the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The party began to build up its district and factory organizations immediately. KMP organizations worked in almost all of the districts of Budapest, the working class areas around the capital, and the provincial industrial centres, Debrecen, Nagyvárad (today Oradea, Rumania), Pápa, Salgótarján, Sátoraljaújhely, Szeged and elsewhere.

Factory organizations were also set up. Council members who joined the KMP formed separate communist groups in the Budapest Workers' Council, and the

Soldiers' Council. In preparation for the fight for the socialist revolution, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the party strove to extend its influence to the armed forces of the bourgeois democratic government, the people's militia which was made up of organized workers, and indeed, even to the police force. Party membership grew to between 30,000–40,000 early in 1919, but the political influence of the party extended well beyond that level since ever wider sections of society recognized a real opportunity for renewal in the rallying cry of the new party.

Yugoslav, Rumanian and Slovak groups also worked within the KMP: there advocated the socialist solution of the national minority problem, and played an important role in creating the communist movements in Yugoslavia, Rumania and Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of 1919 the KMP was one of those who initiated the establishment of the Communist International, the international organization of communist parties. Representing the KMP Endre Rudnyánszky took part in the First Congress of the Comintern in Moscow on 2–9 March 1919, and he was elected a member of the Executive Committee. Leaders of the KMP—commissioned by the Comintern—established a centre for the propagation of the ideas of Leninism in the countries of South-East Central Europe even before the proclamation of the Republic of Councils (21 March 1919).

The Federation of Young Workers, under the leadership of János Lékai, after breaking its ties with the MSzDP in December 1918 and declaring its independence, also sided with the communists. Its work was carried on virtually under communist leadership, though at that time it took care not to call itself communist openly. The KMP helped the Federation to publish its own newspaper, *Ifjú Proletár* (Young Proletarian). This left-wing organization of young workers had about 20,000 adherents.

The movement of ex-soldiers and that of non-commissioned officers, which demanded higher demobilization allowances, employment and clothing allowances from the government, also supported the KMP. Membership of these two organizations reached almost 60,000.

Communists were in control of the mass movements of the unemployed, since the bourgeois democratic government—although it gave some unemployment relief—had no hope of tackling the problem, since people who lost their jobs because of a lack of raw materials, and refugees fleeing from beyond the demarcation lines which were daily drawn tighter and tighter by the Allied Powers, continually increased the number of those without bread.

The revolutionary party espoused the cause of those who suffered from the housing shortage, and who lived in railway carriages, barracks and slum tenements; more than a million people were crowded into Budapest, a city already overpopulated before the war (where building construction had ground to a halt in 1912).

Numerous prominent members of the Hungarian left-wing intelligentsia also joined the ranks of the KMP. Founding members or those who joined the party in the first days included eminent Marxist philosophers, such as Georg Lukács, Béla Fogarasi and László Rudas; the engineers Ármin Helfgott, Gyula Hevesi and József Kelen; Ervin Bauer, a medical biologist, who later achieved world fame,

and his brother Béla Balázs, a poet and writer on the cinema. Among the young communist men of letters and publicists could be found: Aladár Komját, József Lengyel, Ervin Sinkó and József Révai, persons who later became prominent in the Hungarian and international communist movements and turned out classics of socialist writing.

Lajos Kassák and his circle, as mentioned earlier, had close contacts with the party. No other party in the revolutionary camp had a team of similar intellectual weight.

Béla Kun had every reason to refer to the rapid strengthening of the party in his 5 January 1919 letter to Lenin. Writing about the situation before the March turn of events, Zsigmond Kunfi, one of the centrist leaders of the MSzDP, said that: "the great masses of the workers belong to the Social Democratic Party nominally and formally, but they are communist in their thinking and sentiment"; and this was indeed gradually becoming a reality under the influence of *Vörös Újság*, and other communist publications, mass meetings and demonstrations. As adherents of political realism, the leaders of the KMP considered both the factors mentioned by Kunfi in shaping their policy, since they could not ignore the fact that the workers' organizations which were under the influence of the MSzDP had about 700,000 members at that time. For this very reason they directed their principal efforts towards continually facing the left wing and those elements in the centre of the MSzDP, whom they hoped to win over, with a choice of alternatives, thus making them conscious of their responsibility.

These efforts were evident at the time of the January 1919 movement to occupy the factories, and to reject an order about factory committees issued by Ernő Garami, Minister of Commerce, in February 1919. This gave only limited rights of intervention to the workers instead of control over production, and delayed the collective agreements recommended by trade union leaders, in order to serve the cause of "industrial peace". Effective unity was achieved in these actions between left-wing social democrats and communists in opposition to the right-wing and trade union leaders of the party. On frequent occasions well-known officials continued to thunder against the communists—in the name of unity—but were already acting as the communists recommended, and as the working class wanted. The communists adapted the policy Lenin outlined in his "April Theses" to the Hungarian conditions—with increasing results.

Communist influence increased rapidly also outside the working class, among other sections of the working population. In contrast with the bourgeois democratic regime which went from crisis to crisis, more and more people saw the real alternative in the KMP, which they considered capable of starting production by putting an end to capitalist sabotage, taking the banks into public ownership, and introducing workers' control.

The Failure of the Bourgeois Government. Hungary on the Eve of the Socialist Revolution

The bourgeois parties and the MSzDP argued over the implementation of the agrarian reform from November 1918, until in February 1919 legislation on this questions at last saw the light of day. But it was too late to solve the problem and the Act promised full compensation to landowners, under provisions which would have meant endless delay in its implementation. As against this, the KMP demanded the immediate expropriation of the large landed estates, without compensation. The party's agrarian policy provided for the poor peasants to decide on the future of the expropriated land in each village, whether they wanted to cultivate it in co-operative partnership, or individually.

Aware that the law on lands gave considerably less than the peasantry expected, Count Mihály Károlyi forestalled the "regular" process, and began dividing up his own estate at Kál, Heves County, in Northern Hungary on 23 February 1919. In a splendidly human gesture, Károlyi asked the Council of Ministers that the land reform should start with his estate. This isolated act, however, was of little consequence in the nation-wide solution of the agrarian problem. The fright suffered by the landowners in November was over; many of them searched for loopholes in the law on lands, and even more expected the downfall of the government. So Count Károlyi's example was not followed.

In order to establish a "normal" domestic situation, the government wanted to hold elections and, in the meantime, tried to curb the power of the councils, the people's organizations born in the revolution. The KMP—although it did not by any means hold a majority in these—followed the post-April tactics of the Bolsheviks: it demanded full power for the workers' and soldiers' councils, and opposed the holding of elections, the results of which might possibly have consolidated bourgeois democracy. Under the influence of communist propaganda, these bodies, which had a social democratic majority, began to act more and more as genuine bodies of power.

One of the basic problems of the bourgeois democratic revolution was the question of the national minorities. Before 1918 about half the population of the country was not Hungarian. The political parties of the national minorities supported their own independence during the revolution, and it was easy for them to do so since they could sense the backing of Czech, Rumanian and Serbian troops, and the moral support of the victorious Allied Powers. The occupation of the disputed territories—where significant Hungarian communities lived—was in essence completed by the end of 1918.

The new Hungarian government made sincere efforts to settle the problem of the national minorities, but the reforms introduced came too late. The basic error of the government's policy was that it stuck to the territorial sanctity of historical Hungary even when this had already ceased to exist. So it was natural that there was no opportunity even for reasonable compromise, and the ever-narrowing demarcation lines undermined the authority of the government since, though it

did not want to accept unfavourable changes, it was not capable of resisting them, lacking suitable military power and, above all, appropriate political ideas.

The KMP broke boldly with the nationalist policy of territorial integrity, which the MSzDP also shared: it joined battle for a socialist solution of the national minority problem. It was the November 1918 message of the Soviet government to the peoples of Austria-Hungary which gave the most concise expression of this policy. The telegram signed by Lenin and Sverdlov advocated a revolutionary federation of the liberated peoples in the form of a federal socialist republic. This was the objective of the KMP, and was what the proletariat attempted to realize after they came to power on 21 March 1919.

The foreign policy of the bourgeois democratic government was angled towards the Allies. But the Allies supported the successor states of the Habsburg Empire, whose young, eager national bourgeoisies were not content with the satisfaction of justified national claims, but assuaged their appetite at the expense of Hungary. The Allies maintained the blockade which weighed heavily on the famished country and the exhausted economy, and refused to recognize the government. The policy of friendship towards the Allied Powers, therefore, led to inevitable failure. In contrast to this, the KMP advocated friendship and alliance with Soviet Russia and the revolutionary forces of Europe, which represented a suitable counterweight to the plans of the Allies.

The KMP rightly claimed that it enjoyed the confidence and the political, moral and material support of Soviet Russia under the leadership of Lenin, and of the international revolutionary forces; they wanted to follow the "Russian example". This clarity of foreign policy was particularly important in a situation when the existence of Soviet Russia, and its heroic struggle against the forces of intervention and counter-revolution added further strength to the truth of communism day after day.

This struggle won the support also of people who did not share the ideals of Leninism, but understood that the proletariat was able to defend Soviet Russia against the intervention of the Allies; many of them began to look upon the Hungarian communists as people who knew the "secret" of Lenin, and were capable of acting accordingly in Hungary under similarly pressing conditions.

In a letter he wrote on 5 January 1919, Béla Kun anticipated a repetition of the Russian "days of July" in 1917, when the Bolsheviks were forced into temporary illegality. That actually happened on 20 February 1919, when the leaders of the KMP were arrested in the wake of a police provocation—preceded by anything but discreet pressure by the Allied Powers' missions—and the party in fact operated illegally for about a fortnight.

But this attempt did not bring the expected results. The Allied Powers remained distrustful, the right-wing opposition in the government found the force and size of the action inadequate, and the working class was infuriated by the brutality of the police operations and the violence done to Béla Kun and his associates. Béla Kun had every reason to write early in March: "There is also the inevitable, what is called the necessary wrong. The blows which my head has now received, and

possible future blows, are such necessary wrongs. It is bad for me, but in the last resort it is still good for the working class movement!" The blows which fell upon Kun opened the eyes of many people. One speaker trying to explain the policy of the MSzDP at a large Budapest factory could not even make start! He reported that: "Some of the workers not only shouted brutal abuse at me because of the anti-Bolshevik propaganda, but we also reached the point where they nearly attacked me." The effect of the uproar eased the treatment meted out to captives, and though they were not released for the time being, their prison became a veritable party headquarters.

This was the situation when the government made a final effort to consolidate its position. Parliamentary elections were called and campaigning started in earnest early in March. The experience of the Austrian and German elections, where the social democrats had failed to win an absolute majority, made it clear to many left-wing and centrist leaders of the MSzDP that the positions won in the revolution could not be maintained after the elections, and more and more of them listened to the slogans of the communists: "Down with parliamentary elections! All power to the councils of workers and poor peasants!"

The March debates of the Budapest Workers' Council—in which the communists who had been expelled late in January did not take part—were a good measure of the changed mood. On 7 March 1919 the Council passed a resolution on socialization which was moved by Jenő Varga, a left-wing social democrat, who later became a communist, and another, moved by József Pogány, on establishing contact with Soviet Russia. Speakers in the Council and at other forums of the working class movement began to speak about the communists in increasingly conciliatory tones. At the 3 March 1919 session Ernő Czöbel moved that they be released.

The majority of the left-wing social democratic speakers who took part in the 10–11 March sessions of the Budapest Workers' Council when the parliamentary elections were debated, spoke against holding them emphasizing that the working class movement would not be able to maintain the positions conquered in the revolution after the elections; they recommended instead, as an alternative, a purely social democratic government, strengthening of the power of the local councils, and indeed, Soviet rule, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The centrists also moved a resolution during the debate. This document proved more clearly than anything else that even the centre of the MSzDP was moving away from the policy of the party leadership, which aimed at the continuation of the coalition, and were edging increasingly towards the left. In principle the proposal supported the elections, but demanded as conditions the dissolution of the coalition, the establishment of a purely social democratic government, and the realization of an action programme. The most important demands of the programme were: the old state machinery should be dismantled, all public service posts should be filled by elected officials; the structure of workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils should be built up and they should be recognized by law; the immediate introduction of a capital tax; the imposition of state control on the banks; the realization of the land reform through farming co-operatives; diplomatic rela-

tions should be established with Soviet Russia and an alliance made with the Russian proletariat.

Naturally, the party leadership tried to prevent their policy from being questioned in such a decisive manner at the Workers' Council, which was gradually emerging as a forum of great authority in the moment. They therefore prevented discussion on these subjects, and any decision over them by clever manoeuvring. The main argument in the internal disputes was obviously the question of unity, and that was still effective: the Council ultimately voted unanimously in favour of holding parliamentary elections subject to one condition only: that the land reform be implemented under the direction of MSzDP representatives, through the organization of co-operative farms.

The fact that in thirteen counties and major towns government commissioners who were members of the bourgeois parties were forced to resign on 1-17 March also indicated the headway made by the left. Social democrats replaced these officials everywhere except in the southern counties of Somogy and Tolna, where Workers' Council directorates assumed control. The expropriation of large landed estates without compensation began early in March in Somogy County and then in Pest County. Agricultural workers on the large landed estates formed collective farms with the encouragement of the left wing of the social democrats.

Béla Kun responded from prison to the approach made by the left-wing social democrats and some of the centrists in an extensive memorandum. In this he outlined the conditions of co-operation. This letter, dated 11 March 1919, summed up the platform for a possible union in ten points, the essence of which were: a break with the policy of class collaboration, a break with the concept of territorial integrity, and the avoidance of war, if possible, with the new neighbouring states. Béla Kun put forward the view that the proletarian party could only consent to a revolutionary war if all power were in the hands of workers' and peasants' councils, if all joint interests with the capitalists ended, and if there were assurances that such a war would not create a new oppression for the national minorities. He explained that the objective was not a parliamentary, but a Soviet republic. He demanded workers' control and the subsequent socialization of production and distribution, the immediate implementation of the social policy programme of the MSzDP, and state-supported propagation of socialism.

Negotiations with left-wing social democrats, then with representatives of the Budapest Workers' Council, and of the shop-stewards, were started on this basis. The leadership of the MSzDP were also informed about the negotiations. The idea of an armed demonstration on 23 March 1919, resolved by a meeting on 1 March of the workers of Weiss Manfred of Csepel, one of the largest factories in Budapest, took shape with the consent of the factory delegates. (The plan was to free the detained communist leaders from prison through the demonstration, and to take over power.)

The time was ripe for a decision yet it came in an unexpected manner.

On the morning of Thursday, 20 March no newspapers were published in Budapest. There was a general strike of printers "as a result of a job well done by the

Executive Committee of the Communist Party", as one contemporary review pointed out. The capital was left without information at a time when the air was in any case full of tension because of the rumours about freeing the communists, atrocities in the electoral campaign (socialist workers repeatedly broke up the electoral meetings of bourgeois parties), and the impending government crisis. (Pál Szende, Minister of Finance, resigned because the radicals wanted to entrust supreme power to the MSzDP, and did not even want to stand at the elections for that reason. István Szabó, a representative of the Small Holders' Party, backed by the landed peasantry, wanted to resign in protest against the forcible occupations of the landed estates.)

In this situation, on the morning of 20 March 1919, the head of the military mission of the victorious powers, Lieutenant-Colonel Fernand Vix handed a note to Count Mihály Károlyi, President of the Republic. The note advised him about the decision of the victors: a new demarcation line was to be drawn up, and the note demanded that the government give up yet another large area of territory populated exclusively by ethnic Hungarians, and the withdrawal of Hungarian troops behind this line within ten days. Lieutenant-Colonel Vix also advised that unless he received a positive answer to these demands by the evening of 21 March, the missions would immediately leave Budapest.

In fact the principal purpose of the infamous Vix note was not to strike at Hungary. It was drawn up by the French military and political circles, who were preparing a large-scale campaign of intervention against Soviet Russia in the spring of 1919. They were well aware that the spring of 1919 was almost the last opportunity when the military power of the victors could still be used in united action, since the political antagonisms which divided the alliance were becoming increasingly apparent. So they hurriedly mobilized the French forces in the Balkans, and moved the Rumanian and Polish troops to the borders of Soviet Russia torn by civil war, and tried to ensure "order" in Hungary, which could be the hinterland of the intervention campaign.

The government, the coalition parties and Károlyi himself rejected the insolent ultimatum, and started negotiations to cope with the situation. The Council of Ministers held a meeting where they resolved to resign and to reject the note. The majority of the ministers wanted Károlyi to appoint a purely social democratic government. Károlyi himself was also of the same opinion, and wanted to ask Zsigmond Kunfi to form a government, yet, as a fair politician, he also inquired about the intentions of the right. He established contact through intermediaries with Count István Bethlen, leader of the counter-revolutionary nationalist opposition and later Miklós Horthy's Prime Minister who recommended that the ultimatum be accepted, returning a negative answer when asked whether he would be willing to head a government of national unity. At the same time, Bethlen approached Lieutenant-Colonel Vix requesting the occupation of the country, or at least of the capital, as a condition for his willingness to restore "order".

The Communist and Social Democratic Parties Amalgamate: the Victory of the Socialist Revolution

On 20–21 March the leading bodies of the MSzDP were in almost constant consultation. The standpoint that the Social Democratic Party should agree with the communists to take over government was gaining ground in the party leadership and Executive Committee. Only two or three right-wing representatives came out against this while the Workers' Council and the Soldiers' Council were unanimous in supporting the idea of an agreement, or indeed unification. On the morning of 21 March Jenő Landler, a representative of the left-wing social democrats, was sent in the name of the party leadership to the remand prison to inform the leaders of the KMP what the situation was. In the afternoon hours Landler was followed by an official negotiating committee from the MSzDP.

Since the leaders of the KMP only left prison in the evening hours, the final agreement was concluded during the night—on the basis of the communist platform. The principal points of the document on the merger confirm this:

“The dictatorship of the proletariat will be exercised by the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils... a class army of the proletariat which will completely disarm the bourgeoisie is to be set up immediately. The closest possible military and intellectual alliance must be concluded with the Soviet government in Russia, in support of the rule of the proletariat and against Entente imperialism.”

Ministers of the bourgeois political parties who attended the last cabinet meeting on the afternoon of 21 March had no clear notion of what was going on within the ranks of the working class movement. Their social democrat colleagues did not think it necessary to inform them, regarding it as their own internal affair. They worded the rejection of the Vix note, settled routine business and then the government formally tendered its resignation. Shortly afterwards, a declaration bearing Károlyi's signature was issued which, in the critical situation, handed over power “to the proletariat of the peoples of Hungary”. The authenticity of that declaration is still the subject of heated debate. The original draft has not survived and later on Károlyi—when he could no longer harm either his former associates who had probably worded the declaration, or the cause of the revolution—denied in his memoirs that he had ever signed such a document. However, following the March turning-point, he remained loyal to the Republic of Councils. Károlyi's behaviour during this period laid down the foundations for a lasting alliance and brotherhood in arms which kept him in touch with the communists during his exile.

Despite the printers' strike news of the Vix note and the consultations spread rapidly and generated enormous excitement. On 21 March, as Jakab Weltner subsequently recounted, reports reached the MSzDP headquarters one after the other: “The majority of iron and metalworkers, printers and workers in other trades, and in addition the majority of soldiers and people's guards side with the communists; the communists have guns on Gellért Hill.” Later these reports turned out to be largely true. One reason why the last cabinet meeting on 21

March decided on the immediate release of the communist leaders was that they received news of crowds gathering in front of the remand prison and felt it was likely that force would be used to free Béla Kun and his comrades. Finally, in the evening hours, Chief Public Prosecutor Váry intervened personally and offered both his car and his services to the prison inmates, who were likely to become the leaders of the new regime.

During these critical hours a crowd of people assembled in an inner city lecture hall to attend a lecture by Georg Lukács. Lukács was a member of a substitute Central Committee which had been formed after the arrests of 20 February and was also a much-respected leading figure of the KMP. So most of the audience probably expected to hear more than just the advertised lecture on "Culture, Old and New". Also present was Tibor Szamuely, who had just emerged from illegality, he announced the victory of the revolution and the proclamation of the Hungarian Republic of Councils.

From here Szamuely hurried on to the KMP secretariat where he assumed control over the take-over of power. There was method in the "madness" of the situation. At the evening meeting of the Workers' Council Sándor Garbai gave an account of the agreement concluded in the remand prison and then went on to read out the document on the merger:

"The Social Democratic Party of Hungary and the Hungarian Party of Communists, have, on this day, decided upon the complete merger of the two parties at a joint meeting of the leadership... . The party will immediately take over full power in the name of the proletariat."

This brief statement marked the end of the bourgeois democratic phase of the Hungarian revolution and the opening of the socialist phase. This, the last, meeting of the old Workers' Council was once again attended by the representatives of the KMP. After the unanimous endorsement of the afternoon's agreement, the leadership of the two parties, now backed by every body of the working class movement, were able to meet, in the late hours of the night to form the first government of the socialist revolution and to draw up a government programme.

Thus, owing to a fortunate coincidence of historical circumstances, the socialist revolution won a bloodless victory in Hungary. The political take-over was accomplished without the loss of a single life.

The Hungarian Republic of Councils

Organizing Socialist Construction and Revolutionary Defence

During the small hours of 21 March 1919 the leaders of the Hungarian working class movement had to sit down and hammer out the details of their agreement in principle.

At the end of a protracted meeting, which stretched out through the night, the representatives of the newly merged parties came to a decision regarding the setting up of a Revolutionary Governing Council, with the slightly left-of-centre Sándor Garbai—who had demanded an entirely socialist government in January—as chairman. With the exception of Béla Kun, who was responsible for foreign affairs, and Károly Vántus, who worked in the four-member college directing the People's Commissariat for Agriculture, the people's commissars were all centre and left-wing social democrats. Only Mór Erdélyi, head of the People's Commissariat for Food, and perhaps Henrik Kalmár, People's Commissar responsible for the affairs of the German minority living in Hungary could be regarded as being explicitly right-wing. The most prominent right-wingers, who opposed the agreement, had stepped aside. The former leader of the Social Democratic Party, Ernő Garami, left the party and went into exile.

On the other hand, nine out of the thirteen deputy people's commissars in the government were communists. They regarded the government as a provisional one which would remain in office only until the elections, or rather until the councils held their congress. The composition of the government reflected the compromise nature of the inter-party agreement and the common sense of the social democrats who had signed it. Although they had accepted the theoretical platform of the communists, they remained intransigent as far as naming the united party was concerned; for the time being it was called Hungarian Socialist Party (pending the decision of party congress and the Third International). The situation was different as far as the distribution of important posts was concerned. Here the socialists obviously insisted upon the representation "due" them. The communists did not argue over the distribution of ministerial portfolios, since the title of deputy people's commissar was abolished shortly after with the deputies then enjoying equal status with the people's commissars. Consequently, the balance of power within the government was not only restored, but a left-wing majority, based on left-wing support, emerged within the government.

Under a decision adopted at the first meeting, the Governing Council was to carry out the tasks of party leadership until the party congress was answered. The

secretariat of the united party was reorganized on a party basis and efforts were made—through a mutual delegation of journalists—to unify the two party dailies, *Vörös Újság* and *Népszava*.

Béla Kun's letter of 11 March 1919, mentioned above, played a major role in determining the outcome of the merger. In view of Hungary's international and internal situation, and the changes in the mood of the working class, the conditions for the restoration of working class unity were acceptable not only to the social democratic left, but also to the centre.

The merger of the two parties gave rise to numerous problems. Although Béla Kun and other Communist Party leaders were aware of this, they also realized that the events of 20 and 21 March offered a uniquely favourable moment for seizing power and that procrastination for any reason would be a crime. Kun and his associates also knew that notwithstanding the radicalization of the proletariat and the considerable attraction of Communist Party policy, the dictatorship of the proletariat could not be accomplished without social democratic support, since there were over 700,000 people in the organization under their influence. Béla Kun expected—and with justification—that certain changes would take place within the MSZDP, namely the isolation of the right wing, and steady growth in the power of the left, and that this process would continue after the merger of the two parties, under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was in the light of this that he undertook the risks of the merger. It was also clear that the merger had not produced a party of the vanguard type and the communists, led by Béla Kun, continued to stress the necessity of creating such a party throughout the 133 days of the Republic of Councils. In fact, they did everything within their power to create a new type of political party.

As Béla Kun so aptly pointed out in 1920, a number of party and union officials, leading ones in particular, were guided by considerations of *Realpolitik*. Changes which took place in the country's domestic conditions and the international situation contributed to this state of affairs.

On the one hand, they were clearly aware—as we have mentioned—that they would not be able to hold on to the positions of power procured by the working class under the conditions of a bourgeois democracy. On the other hand they hoped that the victory of the proletarian revolution, and the new orientation of foreign policy which was bound to accompany it, would help create more favourable conditions for the structure of Hungarian industry which existed and consequently for the Hungarian working class. In short, they expected the restoration of the old Hungary as an economic entity to result from the 21 March turn of events.

Taking the aforementioned circumstances into account, along with the public mood, it was not surprising that Béla Kun struck an optimistic note when he informed Lenin about the situation in Hungary on 26 March 1919: "The best forces which there have ever been in the Hungarian working class movement are participating in the government... My own personal influence in the Revolutionary Governing Council is such that a firm dictatorship of the proletariat is assured;

the masses are behind me." The merger of the two workers' parties also had its "left-wing" opponents. A number of leaders who remained at large following the wave of arrests in February, members of the substitute Central Committee, overestimated communist influence and were dissatisfied with the provisions of the merger. In 1920 Georg Lukács wrote that the merger "had been received with general dissatisfaction in communist circles". Béla Kun had to throw his full personal authority behind the efforts to persuade the meeting of communist stewards, which was convened twice, to endorse the agreements of 21 March and to declare the formal dissolution of the Communist Party—and this was only done after a lengthy debate. Unable to comprehend the necessity and significance of compromise, the "left-wing" communists weakened the position of left-wing socialists within the united party through their activities and obstructed the polarization which Kun had hoped for. Left-wingers demanded revolution, despite the fact that not even freeing the communist leaders by force on 23 March would have fundamentally changed the balance of power. Essentially Béla Kun's letter of 11 March 1919 also offered a compromise and a merger on the basis of carefully formulated conditions. Further, the left-wing communists failed to understand one of the most important aspects of the March turning-point, namely that it authenticated Lenin's claim of spring 1917, that under favourable conditions, socialist revolution, too, could win peacefully.

These problems did not arise with any particular force during the earliest hours of the new regime.

The night of victory was one of the safest and most peaceful in Budapest for months. There were still crowds of people in the streets and the leaders of the workers' parties were still deeply immersed in negotiations, when armed detachments of workers began to act. They occupied public buildings, banks and factories. They stationed guards in front of jewellers' shops and took firm action against the sporadic attempts at looting. It was with astonishment that the *petit-bourgeois* citizen of the capital, who had for months been bombarded by bourgeois press accounts of the aggressive, cruel and rapacious nature of communism, awoke on 22 March not only to a new day, but also to a new social order—of which he was informed by the street posters. There was no sign of the promised chaos; on the contrary, everything exuded power, discipline and a sense of purpose. Yet, never before in Hungarian history had a revolution been victorious under more difficult conditions. There was no political party or social stratum in Hungary apart from the Hungarian working class—who would have dared to seize power after the Allied Powers had issued their ruthless demands and after the bourgeois government had resigned, and would have dared to defy the military strength of the victors. The proletariat was the only force which was prepared to fight against the Allied Powers. Thus they seized power and began to build a socialist system under extremely difficult conditions.

The bravery of the Hungarian working class also thwarted plans for concerted intervention against Soviet Russia. In order to isolate the Hungarian Republic of

Councils, some of the interventionist forces were recalled from the Soviet frontier, thus averting a serious threat to the young Soviet state.

Creative work began immediately with the birth of the new order.

The socialist revolution gave a tremendous boost to the creative spirit of every class and stratum which was willing to support the Republic of Councils; this was manifest in how the state and the economy were organized, as well as in the fields of cultural and social welfare policy.

Subsequently, after 1919, counter-revolutionary and right-wing social democratic critics of the Republic of Councils frequently ridiculed the dictatorship of the proletariat for the prolific legislative activity which took place. In actual fact the Republic of Councils—wanting to make full use of every moment of peace—carried out legislative activity which was meticulously planned and purposeful. During the first month in power the Red Army was set up; so was a domestic police force and revolutionary tribunals. Factories, banks and residential buildings were nationalized, as were educational and cultural institutions and collections. The trade unions played an important role in the nationalization of the factories. Irrespective of whether they were under social democratic influence or of left-wing orientation, the unions were willing to co-operate in accordance with the requirements of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

During this period the first steps were also taken with the declaration of equal recognition for the various languages to resolve the national minority question in accordance with the spirit of socialism. Moreover, the leaders of the socialist state also declared that they would continue in this direction.

On 2 April a provisional Constitution was announced and a law on elections was promulgated.

“The Revolutionary Governing Council holds it to be necessary to assert the will of Hungary’s working people through workers’, soldiers’ and agricultural councils, as soon as possible.” Elections were set for 7–14 April. Every Hungarian citizen over eighteen years of age who made a living by useful work was entitled to vote; excluded from the right to vote were those who employed waged labour to procure profit, those who drew incomes from sources other than work, clergymen and monks, and those whose political rights had been suspended because they had been involved in some form of criminal activity. The mentally handicapped and those under guardianship were likewise excluded from the electorate.

For those eligible to vote the law guaranteed universal suffrage and a secret ballot: a long-standing demand of the Hungarian working class. For the first time in their history, the broad masses of the Hungarian people were given the right to vote. Some two and a half million people voted for the Republic of Councils in the elections. For the first time too, women could also vote and stand for election.

A number of central and local measures inaugurated by the Republic of Councils stemmed from the desire to improve the conditions of the people rapidly and to achieve social justice as soon as possible. The total prohibition of the sale of alcohol, one of the government’s very first measures, was not too popular in a

country like Hungary where large quantities of wine and other alcoholic beverages were produced and consumed.

It was at this time that a controversial decision was made concerning the agrarian question. Estates over one hundred cadastral *hold* in size (approx. sixty hectares or 150 acres) were expropriated without compensation and transformed into co-operative farms—instead of being distributed amongst the peasantry as the latter had expected. The failure to distribute the land was not a fatal mistake in itself and the leaders of the Republic of Councils did not regard the issue as settled once and for all; indeed they eventually modified the wording of the first draft (allocating about three hectares of household plot from the land distributed for housebuilding) and the need to make additional modifications also arose from time to time.

The way in which the Republic of Councils handled the agrarian question in 1919 was an “infantile disorder” originating from orthodox Marxism, just as it had been in Soviet Russia, this was an ailment from which the Republic of Councils would certainly have recovered, given the opportunity. Suffice it to say that although the Soviet land decree did not provide for the distribution of land either, it did not preclude this possibility and in this respect it was more flexible than the measures adopted by the Republic of Councils in Hungary. Yet in Soviet Russia the distribution of land became general practice during the course of the Revolution, especially after 1921. It is, however, also a fact that during the civil war a practice similar to that pursued in Hungary prevailed in certain places (e. g. in the Ukraine in 1918–19). It was common knowledge that the land decree of 1917 had been the result of a political compromise, concluded between the Bolsheviks and the Left Wing of the Social-Revolutionary Party which exerted substantial influence over the peasantry; this confused decision-makers in Hungary and first and foremost those who had just returned from Soviet Russia. Hungarian political conditions, namely, the lack of a democratic peasant party, seemed to indicate that such a compromise was unnecessary. Moreover, under the conditions of war communism, the initial phase of which the home-comers had experienced, flexible decisions appeared to have no advantages because the peasantry—regardless of whether they cultivated their land privately or in co-operative farms—were not free to dispose of their surplus produce.

While retaining their theoretical reservations, the left-wing social democrats saw that in practice just about every right-wing political party formed between January and March strove to rely on the support of the landed peasantry; in spring 1919 they fought a bitter struggle in Somogy County with their coalition partners, István Nagyatádi Szabó's smallholders. For them, to swell the ranks of the landed peasantry was synonymous with broadening the base for counter-revolution.

Another misleading circumstance was that the land seizures of early March led to the formation of co-operative farms. This was how the farm-hands from the large estates wanted to protect their job opportunities fearing that after the distribution of the estates amongst the peasantry of the nearby villages they would

be left both landless and jobless. Their standpoint, however, was not identical with that of the peasantry as a whole.

One positive aspect of the 1919 handling of the agrarian question was that, unlike in Soviet Russia, the land was not nationalized in Hungary. The political leadership of the Republic of Councils realized that, as a result of 1848, the proportion of landed peasantry in Hungary was substantial. Accordingly, their land was not affected and their holdings were exempt from tax. Nevertheless, the decree did not make adequate allowances for the stratification of the peasantry, as the upper limit for this privilege was extended to fifty-seven hectares, that is, in part to the rich peasant farms giving reassurance to the landed peasantry in this respect on unnumerable occasions. That counter-revolutionary propaganda tried to use tax exemption as a pretext to spread alarm can hardly be blamed on the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Had there been enough time, a practice best suited to the interests of the worker-peasant alliance would, no doubt, have emerged in the matter of this crucial issue. However, time was something the Hungarian Republic of Councils simply did not have.

The proclamation of the dictatorship of the proletariat signified the victory of the socialist revolution in a country ravaged by the First World War and exhausted by the Allied blockade which followed. The emergence of the new neighbouring states, and the territorial changes made for uncertainties in the supply of raw materials and semi-finished goods for Hungarian industry. The number of unemployed rose from day to day and their ranks were swelled by the demobilized soldiers.

A shortage of vital raw materials, energy and food, a depressed industry and unemployment—this was the post-war heritage which the Republic of Councils had to grapple with. It is a matter of great significance that even in this critical situation the Republic of Councils wanted to and was able to register important achievements.

First and foremost, wages were substantially increased for all blue- and white-collar workers. Compared with November–December 1918, the nominal wages of the industrial workforce rose by between one hundred and three hundred per cent. The pay of white-collar workers and teachers rose by eighty per cent compared with the end of 1918. Day-wages for agricultural workers rose to between four and five times what they had been in summer 1918; and in addition benefits in kind rose by between fifty to one hundred per cent (share-cropping, the right to keep livestock, etc.).

Accident and health insurance was extended to cover every worker (smallholders who farmed their land privately could join the insurance system on a voluntary basis). Those insured received sick-pay and free medical care. A draft was prepared on the general introduction of paid holidays, and retirement at the age of sixty. However, owing to the shortage of time and the grave economic and military situation this remained on paper. On the other hand, the introduction of the eight-hour working day, a long-standing demand of the working class, was realized.

There was a serious shortage of food partly because of the war and partly because of the indifferent (or hostile) attitude of the peasantry. Their animosity stemmed from the mistakes in agricultural policy and above all, the failure to distribute land. The situation was aggravated by the distrust of the commodity-producing peasantry in the social changes and in the money by the Republic of Councils (called white money). Yet the proletarian state tried to improve the situation immediately. For instance, some fifty thousand pigs were fattened for the population of Budapest on pig farms outside the capital city and regular supplies of fruit and vegetables were ensured.

The Republic of Councils took important steps to improve the housing situation. Whilst the building of inexpensive homes for workers was envisaged as a long-term solution, for the time being some 100,000 workers in Budapest were moved into the villas and large flats of aristocrats and capitalists. There were also numerous occasions on which similar steps were taken in the provinces.

Those directing cultural policy in 1919 were astonishingly yet fittingly optimistic. During the 133 days for which the Republic of Councils existed—of which less than a month was peaceful—ideas for development were worked out which would have made Hungary a leading cultural nation. Some of these ideas were so far ahead of their time that they are still valid.

Reforms of this magnitude could only be initiated with support from wide sections of the intelligentsia. The fact that numerous well-known scholars were members of the revolutionary leadership encouraged intellectuals to join the revolution. Mention has already been made of the group of intellectuals in the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP); left-wing and centrist social democrats also had their own share of outstanding intellectuals, among them legal experts Péter Ágoston and Zoltán Rónai, Zsigmond Kunfi and József Pogány theorists and Jenő Varga, who was already internationally renowned as an economist. These personalities attracted several members of the progressive intelligentsia.

Progressive bourgeois elements, who regarded 1919 as a consistent continuation and further development of 1918, joined the March revolution—their decision made easier by bloodless victory of that revolution. Certain conservative sections of the intelligentsia also joined: government officials, career army officers, who regarded the proletariat in general and the communists in particular as the backbone of resistance against the shameless demands of the Allied Powers. The majority of career officers and civil servants who continued to serve the dictatorship of the proletariat remained—for the most part—loyal to the Republic of Councils at least up to the end of June 1919, when the liberated north Slovak territories were evacuated. And there were many among them who in 1919 committed themselves for life to the cause of socialism and the proletarian revolution.

The Republic of Councils enacted cultural legislation which deserved the sympathy of the intelligentsia.

In compliance with the desire of generations of progressive educators the schools were nationalized and preparations begun for the creation of a unified socialist educational system.

One of the most pressing tasks was the abolition of the undivided rural elementary schools. The retraining of teachers began and preparations were made for the publication of new textbooks. In some places experimental textbooks were issued and were used for teaching. General knowledge articles which expounded natural and social phenomena in accordance with the materialist conception appeared in youth journals and the specialist educational press, to compensate for the missing textbooks. One of the earliest measures was to increase the number of classes in modern languages and natural science subjects.

University education also underwent significant changes. Professors of progressive thinking were appointed to teach in the various departments. Interest in their lectures was so great that students crowded even the stairways of the lecture halls. The poet Mihály Babits, who was made professor by the dictatorship of the proletariat was inspired to make the following remark in this respect: "I dip the white flag of science, before the red flag of revolution."

In addition to the appointment of new professors, new educational institutions were organized. A School of Economics and the Marx-Engels Workers' University were established, where 200 students (appointed by the workers' councils and the trade unions) were trained in the faculties of public administration, social and natural sciences. Students received their regular wages during their period of training. Distinguished scholars and prominent statesmen taught at the workers' university.

The Republic of Councils nationalized book publishing, the theatres and the film industry. The theatres, which staged progressive plays during the dictatorship, were opened to the workers. The distribution of theatre tickets was done primarily by the trade unions.

The nationalized film industry began the production of new, socialist films. Unfortunately none of the films completed at this time (among them were film versions of works by Maxim Gorky and Upton Sinclair) have survived. Nevertheless the newsreels which did survive the counter-revolutionary destruction bear witness to the socialist commitment of the new Hungarian cinema.

The Republic of Councils put works of art, private libraries, family archives and collections under public ownership, thereby laying down the foundations for a centrally controlled public library, archive and museum network. Public collections placed under state protection were made accessible for public education and scientific research.

The dictatorship of the proletariat entrusted control over artistic life to the artists themselves. Members of the Writers' Directorate included Mihály Babits, Béla Balázs, Tibor Déry, Lajos Kassák, Georg Lukács and Zsigmond Móricz; the Musical Directorate included, among others, Béla Bartók, Ernő Dohnányi, Zoltán Kodály and Béla Reinitz. Bodies of a similar character were set up to direct fine art, the theatre and the cinema.

Although troubled by a great many serious problems, the leaders of the Republic of Councils devoted considerable energy to cultural issues. In addition to Georg

Lukács, who was in charge in his official capacity as a people's commissar, Béla Kun and even Tibor Szamuely often attended debates and discussions.

A list of creative intellectuals who joined the cause of the Republic of Councils reveals that the country's finest minds supported the revolution and had it been able to survive, the Republic of Councils would have created an unprecedented revival in culture and science.

The conditions under which the Republic of Councils came into being and the international situation of the day left no doubt as to the necessity of creating an army to defend the young proletarian state as soon as possible. Fully aware that sooner or later they would be confronted by external imperialist military intervention, the Revolutionary Governing Council set about creating a new, completely reliable and efficient army.

Accordingly, on 25 March, the Revolutionary Governing Council issued a decree on the organization of the Red Army; this declared that the new army was the "class army of the proletariat" and "primarily comprises armed proletarian soldiers recruited from the ranks of the organized workforce".

The aim of the new army was formulated as follows: "It is the duty of every soldier to protect the interests of the revolutionary proletariat against every external and internal enemy and to fight for the liberation of the international proletariat."

On the basis of Soviet Russian experience, political commissars were instituted to guide the work of political education, and to supervise the staff of commanding officers. Under the decree a political commissar had to be appointed, on the basis of a proposal from the Hungarian Socialist Party, to every unit.

Another measure introduced by the Revolutionary Governing Council was the establishment, within the Red Army, of factory workers' battalions—recruited from the industrial workforce—which had to serve as the reserve. The purpose of this was to create reliable reserve which could, in case need arose, be instantly mobilized against both external intervention and internal counter-revolution.

The recruitment of soldiers to the Red Army began immediately. At enthusiastic rallies and special recruitment festivities government leaders called on men to join up—a call which did not go unanswered.

Hundreds of workers and students put in applications to join at the recruiting offices and signed the declaration of recruitment. On 16 April, less than a month after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, recruitment reports spoke of 53,000 applications.

In order to ensure the efficiency of the work of military organization, the Defence Commissariat was reorganized several times and reinforced by revolutionary leaders. Orders were then issued to set up international Red Brigades for Russian and other prisoners of war and refugees who had been stranded in Hungary. The first international brigade—made up of Russian prisoners of war—was set up in March and was soon followed by similar units comprising Poles, Southern Slavs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Italians and other people. Early in April the 1,200-strong Viennese People's Guard arrived in Budapest, under the leadership of the Communist Leo Rothziegel.

The forming of factory units also began. On 8 April workers in the major Budapest factories decided to set up workers' regiments as soon as possible at enthusiastic rallies. In the wake of this decision battalions and regiments were formed in most factories; the members received regular military training after working hours.

The rapid growth in the numbers recruited in the course of April did not signify, however, a similar growth in the strength of the Red Army; because of lack of accommodation and a shortage of equipment only a minority of applicants could actually be accepted for the time being. So the Red Army forces facing the bourgeois armies of the neighbouring countries on the demarcation lines were numerically inferior to their enemies and incomparably less well equipped and organized. At the front, reorganizing the units inherited from the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution had not been completed; the influence of a large number of officers, counter-revolutionary in outlook and hostile to the Republic of Councils, was also a factor to reckon with. The counter-revolutionary officers played a particularly important role on the eastern front, in the control of the so-called Szekler division, which was stationed at the most critical point.

The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Councils

On the very first day of its existence, the Hungarian Republic of Councils put out its first public document, a proclamation addressed "To Everyone". It announced to the international proletariat the significant fact that the world's second workers' state had been established. The proclamation spelled out the programme for the foreign policy of the revolution. The Revolutionary Governing Council "announce their complete ideological and spiritual fellowship with Russia's Soviet government and offer Russia's proletariat a military alliance. They send their fraternal greetings to the workers of Britain, France, Italy and America, at the same time calling on them not to accept for one moment the infamous aggressive campaign of their capitalist governments against the Hungarian Republic of Councils. They call upon the workers and peasants of Bohemia, Rumania, Serbia and Croatia to enter military alliance with them against the bourgeoisie, the boyars, the big landowners and the dynasties. They call upon the workers of German Austria and Germany to follow the example of the Hungarian working class, to break with Paris for good, to enter an alliance with Moscow, to establish republics of councils and wage an armed struggle against the imperialist aggressors."

This proclamation was followed by an appeal to the international working class and bore Béla Kun's signature. In addition to describing the crucial events of March, the appeal stressed that these events were part of a world revolution and stated: "We have placed the Hungarian proletarian revolution under the protection of international socialism."

These excerpts give general idea of how the leaders of the Revolutionary Governing Council assessed the international situation and the chances of defending

the Hungarian proletarian revolution. The government of the proletarian state—and on this issue communist and social democrat commissars were in agreement—counted on the spread of the revolution and consequently on the combination of the armed forces of Soviet Russia and the Republic of Councils.

These concepts were not unrealistic at the given historical time. The combination of the armies of the two revolutionary states was indeed a distinct possibility, although the likelihood of its materializing was not as great as Hungary's political leadership in Budapest would have liked it to be. Since the Soviet-Russian Red Army had pressed forward several hundred kilometers during the few preceding months, there was apparently no reason why it should not cope with the remaining two to three hundred kilometers within a few weeks. Had this been the case, the situation of the Republic of Councils would have been consolidated and there would have been no need to adjust every step to averting the threat of encirclement by the Allied Powers. The situation continued to improve up to mid-April 1919, with the Red Army advancing to within 150 kilometers of the Hungarian regions under the control of the Republic of Councils. During mid-April, prior to Rumanian intervention, Lenin had instructed the commanders of the Russian Red Army to make preparations for a western offensive and to ensure that contact was established with the Hungarian Republic of Councils. As Lenin put it, the main purpose of the offensive was "to establish firm railway links with the Hungarian Republic of Councils".

At the 3 April 1919 meeting of the Moscow Soviet, Lenin said the following about the international significance of the Republic of Councils:

"...the Hungarian revolution because it came into being in a completely different way from ours, reveals to the entire world what had not been clear as far as Russia was concerned: namely that Bolshevism is linked with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and workers' democracy, which moves forward in place of the old parliament..."

"...In a state in which the bourgeoisie does not resist so furiously the tasks of Soviet power will be easier to carry out; it will, in the course of its work, be able to avoid the use of force, and that blood-stained path onto which we were forced by Kerensky and his associates and the imperialists. We will still tread an even more difficult path. But let it be Russia's lot to make a greater sacrifice than other countries. This is not surprising considering that we have been left with only a worthless heap of ruins as our heritage. Other countries arrive at the same destination—Soviet power—along a different, more humane path. It is precisely for this reason that Hungary's example is of crucial significance."

The Republic of Councils' other hope lay in a western, primarily Central European revolution. Hungarian communists counted primarily on the defeated nations and the new successor states which emerged from the ruins of Austria-Hungary, as far as the spread of revolution was concerned. Up to the signing of the peace treaties there was a chance that the Hungarian example would be followed in both Austria and Germany; indeed in both countries the working class movement disposed of quite powerful positions.

In Czechoslovakia and even more so in Yugoslavia a new wave of revolutionary upheaval began after 21 March, which hindered the bourgeoisie from consolidating their order. In Rumania the working class showed numerous signs of solidarity with revolutionary ideas—despite the intense reign of terror.

Workers in numerous other countries (Poland, Italy, France) also welcomed the proclamation of the Republic of Councils. But while the news of the Hungarian revolution evoked joy and solidarity from the working people of the countries of Europe, it aroused shock among the leaders of the victorious Great Powers and the neighbouring bourgeois states. The first reaction was the same almost everywhere: capitalist Europe could not tolerate a hotbed of Bolshevism in the middle of Europe. "...every power must unite and the path of Bolshevism must be cut off"—said French Foreign Minister Pichon in Parliament at the end of March.

Leaders of the imperialist powers unanimously agreed that the dictatorship of the proletariat could not be tolerated in Hungary. However, opinions differed as to how the dictatorship should be overthrown. Behind these differences lay the conflicting interests of the imperialist countries. From the outset, France advocated military intervention, while the British and the Americans preferred "peaceful" means, diplomatic pressure, economic blackmail, fomenting discord in the revolutionary camp. However, this situation provided an opportunity for certain time-saving manoeuvres; accordingly, on 24 March, Béla Kun sent an official memorandum to the Great Powers. In this Béla Kun stressed that the Republic of Councils regarded the Belgrade Armistice as valid, but refused to acknowledge the Vix note. Instead they would like to negotiate with a delegation from the Allied Powers in Budapest. The memorandum also stated that the dictatorship of the proletariat was based on socialism, and it was this that linked it with Soviet Russia, though the alliance was not of an aggressive character.

Since the Allied Powers were unable to reject the proposals for negotiations outright, General Ian Smuts arrived in the Hungarian capital on 4 April 1919. Smuts offered a slightly modified version of the Vix note—under which a more favourable demarcation line would have been drawn up and a neutral zone created. In exchange it held out the promise that the economic blockade of the Allied Powers would be lifted. In their reply—which was conveyed to General Smuts by Béla Kun—the Revolutionary Governing Council demanded the settlement of territorial issues, observation of the Belgrade Armistice agreement and the calling of a central European conference to promote this. On his return to Paris Smuts expressed his support for Kun's proposals. However, acceptance of the French standpoint (which advocated intervention) wiped out any chances of the proposal being discussed at the peace conference. The French military leadership began to prepare the armies of the bourgeois states which bordered on Hungary for military intervention.

On 13 April revolution won a decisive victory in Munich and the Bavarian Republic of Councils was proclaimed—strengthening the faith and hope in world revolution. By this time, however, the question of intervention had been settled...

On 16 April a brief period of peace was replaced by a life and death struggle.

The Revolutionary War. Struggle against Intervention from Abroad and the Enemy at Home

At dawn on 16 April the Rumanian Army launched an attack on the eastern front section of the Red Army. To halt and repel the attack, the Red Army engaged the enemy in fierce combat. However, because of treason on the part of the commander and officer corps of the Székely division, who capitulated on 26 April 1919, these efforts were doomed to failure. It was in vain that the Revolutionary Governing Council and the Defence Commissariat ordered the redeployment of forces which could be spared from the other battlefronts; the gap created by treachery in the line of defence could not be plugged and the reinforcements which were sent into action were wiped out, one after the other.

On receiving news of the offensive and the treachery, the Revolutionary Governing Council called every class-conscious worker to arms. The military training of the regiments of factory workers was stepped up. On 23 April, at the first inspection of the workers' divisions—in civilian clothes and armed—the twenty-four new worker battalions from the factories of Budapest marched through the streets of the capital.

The military situation became increasingly serious, especially after the loss on 20 and 23 April, respectively, of two key eastern Hungarian towns, Nagyvárad and Debrecen. In this difficult situation it became necessary to set up a separate army command on the eastern front in the Trans-Tisza region to ensure direct control over the army at the front. The Revolutionary Governing Council appointed Vilmos Böhm (1880–1949) commander and Colonel Aurél Stromfeld (1878–1927), one of the most talented staff officers of Austria-Hungary, as chief of staff. An under-secretary of defence under the Károlyi government, Stromfeld withdrew to Győr after the proclamation of the Republic of Councils. When, in this critical situation, Tibor Szamuely called on him to offer him this commission, Stromfeld decided to take up the challenge and try to reorganize a retreating and disarrayed army and halt the hostile offensive.

Having assessed the situation on the front and the damage done to the army by demoralization, Stromfeld arrived at the conclusion that the only chance of reorganization, the only possibility of halting the offensive lay in the evacuation of the Trans-Tisza region and building a line of defence based on River Tisza. That his conception was a realistic one was underlined by the fact that on 27 April the Czechoslovak army also began to press forward into north-north-eastern Hungary. After the fall of two important junctions within three days, Munkács (now Munkachevo, Soviet Union) and Sátoraljaújhely the road to Miskolc and Salgótarján, the country's industrial centre, lay open. Miskolc had to be evacuated on 1 May and subsequently a large part of northern Hungary was temporarily occupied by the enemy. Yugoslav troops also launched an offensive along the southern demarcation line and, with the assistance of French units, occupied Makó and Hódmezővásárhely. On 28 April General Presan, the Rumanian chief of staff, suggested to Marshal Foch that the whole territory of the Republic of

Councils be occupied—and indeed it looked as though nothing could hold up the realization of this plan. At the end of April foreign observers were convinced that the days of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary were numbered.

Béla Kun, who was responsible for foreign affairs, tried every conceivable diplomatic manoeuvre. He sent peace proposals to the governments of the neighbouring countries, simultaneously sending a copy to President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, who was in Paris for the peace conference. Early in May advanced sentries of the Rumanian forces made an attempt to cross River Tisza and invaded Szolnok, a town located one hundred kilometres from Budapest. At the same time, counter-revolutionary army officers and officials attempted a political take-over in the town. As the Red Army was in disarray the road to Budapest was open to the enemy.

In the meantime the capital of the revolution was preparing to celebrate.

Budapest was decorated with red flags in the honour of the celebrations for the first free May Day. Red flags, triumphal arches and columns, allegorical pictures and statues of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Ervin Szabó adorned the main thoroughfares. On 1 May 600,000 workers took part in the march to the City Park. In the afternoon colourful programmes were put on in various parts of the capital to entertain the vast crowds of people. The festivities ended with a spectacular firework display. The festivities, notwithstanding the ominous sound of the approaching battlefield provided a background to the crackling of the fireworks.

It was in this critical situation that the Revolutionary Governing Council met on the evening of 1 May to decide what should be done next. The internal situation was aggravated by the fact that some of the former social democrat leaders were wavering and suggesting that the Revolutionary Governing Council should resign and capitulate. Vilmos Böhm, commander-in-chief of the army, issued orders for the cessation of hostilities. Their behaviour is explained by the extremely grave military situation. Moreover, they were informed—erroneously—that the Rumanians had crossed River Tisza and if this was the case, all further resistance seemed to be hopeless. Naturally the communists stood for the continuation of the struggle; they also wanted a matter of such crucial importance to be put to other working class forums as well the Budapest Workers' Council, the shop-steward bodies of the major trade unions, and so on. To the great astonishment of those present, even prominent right-wing trade union leaders who were attending the meeting supported this proposal, a factor which decided the issue in favour of the communists and the left wing. After a dramatic speech by Béla Kun at the meeting of the Budapest Workers' and Soldiers' Council—in which he spoke openly of the realities—the majority of workers' representatives voted to defend the Republic of Councils and adopted a resolution on the general mobilization of the proletariat. On the following day, 3 May, leaders of the Revolutionary Governing Council and the Workers' Council called on Budapest factories and industrial plants to mobilize the workers. The capital city's proletariat were joined by the workers from the provincial towns as well. All of this created the conditions for the political and military leadership of the dictatorship of the proletariat to tackle successfully the

two most pressing tasks: the consolidation of the battlefronts and the reorganization of the army.

In this respect it was crucial to organize the mobilization rapidly. The Revolutionary Governing Council allocated this task to the trade unions since they had suitable experience in mobilizing the masses. As a result of the mobilization the trade unions sent over 40,000 union members to join the army, of whom 17,000 were immediately despatched to the front. The Republic of Councils regarded the May turning-point as marking the birth of the new army.

The recovery of the proletariat strengthened the faith of the waverers within the government as well. The Revolutionary Governing Council—like the Budapest district and local councils—had sent many of their members, in most cases half of them, to the front, where even the waverers could see for themselves that the workers were able and wanted to put up resistance. Vilmos Böhm, who on 1 May had qualified resistance as revolutionary romanticism, stayed on and together with Aurél Stromfeld played an important role in rebuilding the army.

During this period the Tisza bridgehead at Szolnok and the Salgótarján coalfield were the two points most in danger on the frontlines of the Republic of Councils. Fighting shoulder to shoulder, the workers' regiments and armed Salgótarján miners went into battle against the interventionist troops and halted their offensive. Their successes restored the confidence of the troops, and by providing a breathing-space in the fighting, made it possible to prepare a counter-offensive and to consolidate the frontlines.

The attack of the interventionist Rumanian troops activated enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the country. As the interventionist army pressed forward and as the units of the Red Army retreated, so the flame of counter-revolution spread. Former army officers, gendarmes, civil servants and landowners attacked retreating Red Army units, and arrested members and leaders of the workers' and soldiers' councils. Representatives of the Hungarian ruling class, renowned for their nationalism and chauvinism, paved the way for the Rumanian, Czechoslovak and Southern Slav armies whom they had hated so vehemently.

For a long time, however, the various counter-revolutionary movements were unable to rouse an armed insurrection. This was largely due to the work of the Political Investigation Department of the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs, which was headed by Ottó Korvin. Korvin, a communist, and his deputy, Imre Sallai, together with other department members who came from working class background, carried out thorough and wide-ranging investigations and were successful in uncovering all the illegal organizations one after the other. Tibor Szamuely's Security Forces played an important role in suppressing and retaliating against local revolts behind the front. Of necessity they were strict, but never excessively so. The government invested Szamuely with full powers to ensure law and order in the territory behind the frontlines.

Generally speaking, during this period the counter-revolutionary incidents

inside the country were independent and isolated acts, not linked with the counter-revolutionary centres outside.

During the critical May period the *émigré* counter-revolutionaries also stepped up their activities. With tacit support from the Austrian police and the approval of the Allied missions, a handful of Hungarian counter-revolutionaries broke into the Republic of Councils' Embassy in Vienna and stole 135,000,000 crowns deposited there for foreign trade purposes; for a brief period they also held captive top embassy officials. The *émigré* counter-revolutionaries wanted to meet their rapidly growing costs from this theft. In addition, Count Gyula Károlyi, a big Hungarian landowner, formed a counter-revolutionary government in Arad (now in Rumania) with Franco-Rumanian support, which moved to Szeged, then under French occupation at the end of May.

This government was shortly to become the central rallying point for the forces of counter-revolutionary reaction led by Rear-Admiral Miklós Horthy and for the army of the white terror. In addition to robbing the Hungarian embassy in Vienna, the army officers who were organizing in Austrian soil tried to break through into the territory of the Republic of Councils; however, their plans were thwarted when their troops trying to cross River Leitha were repelled by the Red Guard.

The right-wing social democrat opposition, hiding out in leading trade union positions, presented an even greater problem. From the middle of April 1919, in the wake of the first difficulties experienced by the proletarian state, they emerged as an organized force and, relying on the organized workforce and the trade union apparatus, strove to assert their political influence.

Exploiting the fact that the role of the trade unions under the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been clarified, the right-wing opposition began to organize partly because of the difficulties of the revolution and partly because they feared they would lose their influence to the communists. For Béla Kun and his associates made no secret of their intention of creating a revolutionary, vanguard party out of the inefficient, vast "united" party. Accordingly, they pressed for the separation of the party and the trade unions, which, obviously, would have restricted the political power of the right-wing leaders concealed in the trade unions. During the critical May period the oppositionists helped to thwart impending military catastrophe since if a collapse did occur, it would strip them altogether of any possibility of compromise. However, in mid-May, as soon as the immediate danger was passed, they began consultations of an oppositionist complexion about the political situation, to which they also invited members of the government. The main subject of discussion at these meetings—more often than not held in the presence of members of the Governing Council—was that since the immediate threat of capitulation had been averted there was now a favourable opportunity for a compromise with the Allied Powers. A "favourable compromise" was, to right-wing trade union leaders, the only way out of a difficult situation. They believed that they had a better chance of achieving this than the official representatives of the Governing Council. Fearing possible defeat in the imminent military campaign

in northern Hungary, and seeking opportunities for a speedy compromise, the trade union leaders—with the knowledge though not approval of the Governing Council and Béla Kun made contact with the representative of the British military mission. However, since he was unable to give any guarantees unless they were vested with full powers, negotiations inevitably broke down. The debate provoked by the right-wing trade unionists underlined the need to define the place and role of the trade unions without delay. Accordingly, numerous measures were introduced in May and June 1919. Trade union representatives were involved in the work of allocating wages and distributing the scanty supplies. They were also entrusted with the management of the labour force as well as numerous tasks concerned with culture and social welfare. When the National Economic Council, the body responsible for economic management, was set up, a special committee comprising trade union representatives was organized to function alongside it. The council was obliged “to consult the committee on every important issue” and the committee was also entitled to initiate new measures. In June 1919 the committee achieved good results in stepping up production and improving work discipline.

As a result of the May debates the communists were unable to enforce their ideas on the separation of party and trade unions at the congress of the united party. Although the communists adhered to their stance during the debate, they did not allow things to come to a head and were thus able to prevent acceptance of the opposing standpoint as well. The congress accepted the Marxist-Leninist party programme presented by Béla Kun, but, after heated debate, rejected the agreement concerning the new party's name laid down in the merger document (under this agreement the final decision rested with the Communist International, which rather naturally, recommended that the term “communist” be taken up in the new party's name). Finally, a compromise was reached: the new party took the name the Hungarian Party of Socialist and Communist Workers.

At Béla Kun's explicit request Lenin sent a message of greetings to the opening of the congress. In this famous message he said the following: “Be resolute. Should you come across wavering amongst the socialists who yesterday joined you, the dictatorship of the proletariat, or amongst the *petite bourgeoisie*, suppress these waverers ruthlessly. To be shot dead—this is the rightful fate of the coward in war.”

Lenin's words shocked the waverers and Jakab Weltner did not hesitate to reject Lenin's warning openly on the pages of *Népszava*.

The election of the party leadership evoked even more violent conflict. The majority of the delegates dropped the names of several communist and left-wing social democrats from the compromise official recommended list which was based on parity, replacing them with prominent right-wing party and union leaders. It was now the turn of the communists to threaten to secede. After a meeting of former social democratic leaders the congress reconvened and, at Vilmos Böhm's proposal, accepted the original list by public acclaim.

The congress of the youth organization resulted in quite a different outcome.

A merger of the youth organizations took place after the proclamation of the Republic of Councils. Here, unlike in the case of the united party, the leadership

was taken over completely by the communists; the federation decided to call itself the Hungarian Federation of Young Communist Workers (KMSz).

The Federation's first congress confirmed its communist political line. The Hungarian organization of young communist workers played an outstanding role in rallying revolutionary youth organizations internationally. It was planned to hold the founding congress of the Communist Youth International in Budapest.

The military successes of the Red Army in northern Hungary played a crucial role in overcoming opposition. Even the most right-wing leaders were unable to remain indifferent to the impact of victory and most of them, although only temporarily, regained their faith in the Republic of Councils. Thus by mid-June the controversy had subsided.

Preparations for the military campaign began in mid-May. These were preceded by successful defensive battles in the Salgótarján Basin and the concentration of the reorganized army in the area between the rivers Danube and Tisza and in particular in the north-east of this region since the government and the military leadership anticipated a Franco-Yugoslav offensive in a south-north direction. At the same time plans were being drafted, on the basis of Aurél Stromfeld's suggestions, for a counter-offensive against the Czechoslovak army. When it appeared that the threat of an offensive from the south was not imminent, Vilmos Böhm issued orders for the liberation of Miskolc. Before the offensive was launched, Tibor Szamuely flew to Soviet Russia to hold talks on the possibilities of military co-operation and to give Lenin a first-hand account of the situation in the Republic of Councils.

On 20 May an army group, its ranks replenished and reinforced by the workers' detachments from the Budapest factories, carried out a successful offensive with the support of workers from Miskolc and Diósgyőr—as a result of which one of the country's major industrial centres was freed from imperialist occupation. After taking Miskolc, the Red Army cleared the right bank of River Tisza and drove a wedge between the Czech and Rumanian troops.

On 30 May the Red Army offensive advanced along the full length of the front. From the very first day the attack was successful and a number of the towns of key importance in northern Hungary were liberated, one after the other: Losonc on 30 May; Léva and Érsekújvár on 3 June; and Kassa, Korpona and Selmecbánya, on 6 June. (These towns are now Lučenec, Levice, Nové Zámky, Košice, Krupina and Banská Št'avnica in Czechoslovakia).

The secret of the rapid advance lay partly in the impaired discipline and declining fighting morale of section of the Czechoslovak troops and partly in the Czechoslovak military tactic of evading major clashes. During this phase of the offensive, when the Red Army was powerful enough to wipe out the enemy troops, the Czechoslovak army command evaded major confrontation, even accepting territorial losses rather than risk their armed forces.

The Hungarian and Slovak proletariat in the liberated areas gave Red Army soldiers an enthusiastic welcome. They applied to join up by the hundreds and went into action immediately.

The working population behind the frontlines welcomed the news of the victorious advance and the warding off of the threat to the power of the councils. When news spread of the occupation of Kassa, ceremonious rallies were staged in Budapest and other Hungarian towns, at which leaders of the Governing Council reported on the military situation and the tasks lying ahead.

After 6 June the Red Army offensive scored further important victories with the occupation of important settlements in central and eastern Slovakia—Zólyom, Eperjes, Bártfa and Rozsnyó (now Zvolen, Prešov, Bardejov, Rožňava in Czechoslovakia). Thus the two groups of the Czechoslovak army were cut off from each other and eastern Slovakia was in essence liberated.

The main objective of the military campaign had thus been accomplished. The Czechoslovak army had been dealt a heavy blow and the liberation of eastern Slovakia made it possible to set up, on the basis of the nations' right to self-determination, the Slovak Republic of Councils, the first socialist state of Slovak workers. On 16 June the Slovak Republic of Councils was proclaimed in Eperjes and a Slovak Revolutionary Governing Council was formed with Antonín Janoušek, a Czech worker, as President. In alliance with the Hungarian Republic of Councils, the new republic began to carry out socialist transformation and the organization of the Slovak Red Army.

National Meeting of Councils and New Military Offensive by the Allied Powers

On 9 June, when the Red Army was still on the offensive, the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, sent a note, which demanded the immediate cessation of hostilities in the name of the peace conference. In return the Powers held out the promise to the Hungarian government that they could be invited to attend the peace conference, and that further intervention would cease. Should Hungary reject this demand, she would be confronted by a French offensive on her southern borders under the command of General Franchet d'Espéray.

The invitation held out the hope of diplomatic recognition for the new, independent Hungary. At the same time acceptance of the note would have meant the halting of a triumphant offensive, indeed it raised the possibility of retreat. In his reply, Béla Kun described the war against Czechoslovakia as a war of defence on the basis of the Belgrade Armistice Agreement, but accepted the invitation to Paris; declaring that he did not base his stand on territorial integrity. In short, he expressed willingness to negotiate, but did not undertake any kind of commitment.

On 13 June another note, this time an ultimatum arrived from Paris. It called on the Hungarian government to withdraw Red Army units to the frontiers defined by the note, henceforth to be Hungary's new boundaries. In return for the withdrawal from Slovakia it was promised that the Rumanian army would be withdrawn from eastern Hungary, from the region lying east of River Tisza.

The leadership of the united party met to discuss Hungary's reaction to the note. A decision had to be made in an extraordinarily difficult international situation. Numerous questions arose which the leaders of the dictatorship of the proletariat found almost impossible to answer: if they complied, would the Great Powers recognize the Republic of Councils and would they cease intervention? Would Rumania evacuate the Trans-Tisza region? The military situation in Soviet Russia was a factor to be reckoned with; for, despite the occasional over-optimistic information, direct information supplied by Szamuely made the difficulties clear enough—the siege of Petrograd, Denikin's offensive, Kolchak's repeated attempts to reach River Volga and the struggle against the nationalist forces in the Ukraine.

On 15 June the communists in Austria attempted a coup. Understandably, the leaders of the Republic of Councils attached great hopes to this. But the attempt failed. The German Peace Treaty was just about to be signed and this, in effect, sealed the fate of both German, and Central European revolution.

There was heated debate among the leaders of the dictatorship of the proletariat as to how they should respond to the note. Vilmos Böhm pressed for acceptance of the ultimatum, arguing that his forces were exhausted and in the long run would not be able to carry out the tasks lying ahead. A group of communist leaders, Béla Kun among them, also proposed that the ultimatum be accepted—on the grounds that the international political situation was taking a decidedly unfavourable turn as far as the Republic of Councils was concerned. Moreover, as the forces of counter-revolution were gathering strength they felt that the acceptance of a ceasefire would give the dictatorship of the proletariat a much needed breathing-space. This, as they saw it, would have given them the opportunity to consolidate the internal situation and to await a more favourable turn in the international political situation.

The final decision over the issue of the ultimatum was made by the National Assembly of Councils (14–23 June 1919).

On the morning of 14 June 1919 large groups of people, both soldiers and civilians, gathered at the City (now Erkel) Theatre. They were delegates to the National Assembly of Councils, the body which acted as Parliament in the Republic of Councils.

The military situation, which was basically favourable, held out the promise of internal consolidation. The heated debates between the communists and social democrats were subsiding in the wake of the military victories and there now appeared a good chance for a realistic assessment of the activities of the Republic of Councils to date and to define the tasks lying ahead. A small sign of consolidation was the fact that the first stamp of the Hungarian proletarian state were issued in honour of the council congress with each delegate receiving a numbered block. The fact that a Constitution for the Republic of Councils was on the agenda and that this was adopted, after a thoroughgoing debate, also pointed to a growing feeling of confidence. Whilst the domestic scene seemed to justify cautious optimism, clouds were already gathering on the international horizon.

One sign of the improvement in the internal situation was that the discussions

focused primarily on economic issues. On 16 June Varga gave a talk on the economic situation in which he outlined the course of nationalization and the organization of the new economy. He also spoke about the role the trade unions would play in economic management and praised their efforts to improve work discipline. Jenő Varga's moderate and objective report was followed by contributions from People's Commissars Gyula Lengyel and Jenő Hamburger. Hamburger's account revealed that there was good prospects for a bumper crop that year. This part of his speech was linked to a report from People's Commissar Mór Erdélyi on issues pertaining to food supply. Erdélyi reported that towns were now over the worst of the crisis as far as food supplies were concerned. As a result, the planned cuts in bread and flour rations had not taken place. Flour, potato and vegetable stocks had increased and improved supply had made the restoration of market trading in certain commodities possible.

Reporting on the situation at the front, Böhm praised the splendid performance of the Red Army in the military campaign in northern Hungary. Although Böhm was justly proud of these successes, he had to point out that the soldiers were becoming increasingly fatigued; he also reported a defeatist mood which was cropping up here and there and the underlying causes of this. He stressed internal unity and praised his communist associates, expressing full agreement with Béla Kun.

Acting upon a proposal submitted by Vilmos Böhm and Béla Szántó, the Congress of Councils adopted a resolution on strengthening the army and announced the introduction of conscription.

The debate on foreign policy was particularly crucial. Béla Kun recommended that the Clemenceau note be accepted and the Red Army be ordered to withdraw. He based his arguments on developments in the international revolutionary situation, the military situation and the strengthening of counter-revolutionary subversion. Regarding the start of negotiations as imperative, Béla Kun stressed that any peace agreement which was concluded would only be a temporary one as it could in any case be wiped out by a new wave of international revolution.

In the subsequent debate Zsigmond Kunfi and Illés Mónus supported Béla Kun's proposal from the social democratic position; at this stage they no longer believed in the revolution and were looking for a compromise, at any price.

In the name of the left, several communists spoke out against Kun's proposal. Tibor Szamuely rejected the idea of a compromise agreement with the enemy on principle. József Pogány, who overestimated the power of the Red Army and underestimated the power of the enemy, rejected the proposal on military grounds. The right-wing social democrat Károly Peyer also rejected the proposal. His rejection, however, was based on nationalist reasons. Although a telegram recommending caution arrived from Lenin during the debate, Béla Kun stuck to his own assessment of the situation. Although the majority of those taking part in the debate (eight out of ten speakers) advocated the rejection of the note, in order to preserve unity, the National Assembly of Councils accepted the official proposal which—

after endorsing the government's political activity to date—entrusted the Governing Council with making the actual decision.

After a series of negotiations lasting ten days and a number of diplomatic exchanges, they resolved to accept retreat. Lenin's anxieties were immediately confirmed: the Allied Powers failed to carry out their side of the bargain and the Rumanian army did not vacate the Trans-Tisza region.

The National Assembly of Councils debated and (on the basis of a proposal submitted by Zoltán Rónai, the People's Commissar for Justice) passed the new Constitution, Hungary's first written Constitution. In the first place the Constitution incorporated the rights of workers and restricted the right of the former exploiters to vote, imposing compulsory work on them. The Revolutionary Governing Council proclaimed Hungary a Federal Republic of Councils and emphasized the open nature of this federation, which other republics of councils could also join freely.

The intention of those who drafted the Constitution was to indicate that the Republic of Councils was not simply an internal matter for the Hungarians, but was among other things, an experiment in resolving the complex East European national minority issue within the framework of a socialist federation. The internationalism of this experiment was expressed in those clauses in the Constitution which guaranteed autonomy for the national minorities living in Hungary.

The question of the counter-revolution, the last item on the official agenda, was not debated because of lack of time. This was despite the fact that the threat of counter-revolution and the growing anti-Semitic propaganda were raised on a number of occasions. It was an irony of fate that one of the most important acts of domestic counter-revolution, the mutiny in the area between the rivers Danube and Tisza, erupted on 18 June, almost at the very hour of decision.

The armed rebellion in the area between the rivers Danube and Tisza started in the southern Hungarian town of Kalocsa and its vicinity. Heavily armed and even equipped with cannons, the irregular detachments of insurrectionists occupied a number of settlements. The movement spread to Tolna County on the other bank of the Danube. The Revolutionary Governing Council despatched several law enforcement and Red Army units to the scene, as well as Tibor Szamuely's special Security Forces. These soon suppressed the uprising and on this occasion firm action was taken against the instigators. The forces of counter-revolution in Budapest strove to exploit differences between the social democrats and the communists, and to spread a mood of defeat; and tried to convince themselves that they could count on right-wing social democratic opposition to the Republic of Councils.

On the afternoon of 24 June counter-revolutionary formations occupied the telephone exchange and a number of units of the Danube flotilla emerged from their Óbuda harbour under the national colours and fired on the Hungaria Hotel, the Soviet House as it was known, where the People's Commissars had their headquarters. However, the organizers of this act were disappointed in their expectations of support from the middle class and the workers. There was no move to support the counter-revolutionary attack, and the workers' units which were

mobilized, together with armed members of the Budapest district councils put down the uprising in a matter of hours. The naval mutineers made an unsuccessful attempt to establish contact with the insurrectionists on the banks of the Danube; the forces of the latter had by that time been wiped out. They were therefore left with no other alternative but to sail further south and capitulate to the British Danube flotilla.

The Defeat of the Republic of Councils

The suppression of the counter-revolution of 24 June was a great feat for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was proof that despite their grievances, desire for peace and day-to-day problems, the workers were ready to defend the Republic of Councils. It was clear that the republic could not be toppled from the inside.

After the evacuation of the occupied areas in the north, Aurél Stromfeld, the architect of the victorious Red Army offensive, resigned. His departure was a serious blow from both the military and political point of view. Although Stromfeld had disagreed with the forced retreat, later he nevertheless spoke proudly of his deeds before a counter-revolutionary court.

The Red Army and the workers' regiments were overwhelmed by a feeling of bitterness and despondency in the wake of the retreat. The workers' divisions withdrawn from northern Hungary were used for the purposes of law enforcement in Transdanubia, which also had unfavourable repercussions. That section of the officer corps who had joined the revolution during the military campaign of May-June out of sheer nationalist sentiment, now turned their backs on the dictatorship of the proletariat for good. The mass backing for the dictatorship of the proletariat, especially among the middle-class and *petit bourgeois* strata, diminished perceptibly. The impact of the military success of May and June on these masses was now reversed. Whilst the army was waging a successful campaign it was easier for those behind the lines to tolerate sacrifice. Now all sacrifice appeared futile.

During the weeks following the withdrawal of the Red Army the communist leaders of the dictatorship of the proletariat pressed for the army and the entire army command to be reorganized on a new basis. Accordingly, on 12 June the Revolutionary Governing Council introduced conscription and ordered the mobilization of reserve officers.

A former career army officer, Ferenc Julier, became the new army chief of staff. Under Julier's command and illicit support, however, the general staff soon became a rallying place and sanctuary for counter-revolutionary army officers. These officers plotted to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat. The decision of leaders of the Revolutionary Governing Council to begin preparations for a military campaign to liberate the Trans-Tisza region seemed to offer a suitable opportunity for this. Before that, the Revolutionary Governing Council had tried to bring about the promised evacuation of this area by diplomatic means, but the victorious powers, with unconcealed cynicism, refused to fulfil their promises.

When this became obvious the Revolutionary Governing Council and the general staff responded by adopting a decision to launch an offensive against the Rumanian army. Military success appeared to be uncertain, to say the least, considering that the Rumanian army was superior in both numbers and discipline. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Revolutionary Governing Council believed that the tensions generated by domestic difficulties could only be relieved by successes on the battlefield, in addition, the food reserves located in the Trans-Tisza region were greatly needed. The government was little short of duped into the risky undertaking by Julier, the new chief of staff.

The offensive was timed to coincide with the launch of an international strike in aid of Soviet Russia and the Hungarian Republic of Councils. Although minor successes were scored, the campaign did not result in international protest of a magnitude and extent which could significantly influence the position of the Republic of Councils.

On 20 June the Red Army crossed River Tisza and, establishing bridgeheads at Tokaj, Szolnok and Csongrád, continued to press ahead. For three days the offensive progressed almost entirely unhindered. The Szolnok group penetrated deep into the Trans-Tisza region and the other two groups although less successfully also managed to forge ahead. The Rumanian counter-offensive was launched on 24 June. On seeing the superiority of the enemy forces, the career officers on the general staff decided to play for defeat: they ordered the evacuation of the Trans-Tisza region. This was in fact carried out on 25 July. The retreating troops were followed by the Rumanian forces who began preparations to cross the Tisza on 27 July and actually crossed the river on 29 with substantial forces. At this point the traitors in the general staff began openly to demand the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council; in the military fiasco which developed the majority of commanding officers left the confused rank and file soldiers on their own. Meanwhile in Vienna delegates of the Allied Powers and Hungarian social democrat delegates were already engaged in talks on how the workers' state could be disbanded. Only the ways and means could be discussed since the fate of the Republic of Councils had already been sealed.

On 30 July Béla Kun was informed of the Vienna talks by Vilmos Böhm, Károly Peyer and Jakab Weltner at an Austro-Hungarian frontier station. They also tried to persuade Kun to capitulate. Kun, however, was resolute in his rejection as he was convinced that the May turning-point would be repeated. He telegraphed Lenin asking him to step up military efforts in Bessarabia, and tried to mobilize the workers of Budapest. However, the evacuation of the Ukraine was just about to take place in the wake of the offensive launched by Denikin and the Ukrainian nationalists and under these circumstances there was no possibility of Russian help. At the same time those social democrat People's Commissars and trade union leaders who no longer believed that resistance would bring a successful outcome disobeyed the orders to mobilize the working class once again. And indeed it was true that under the circumstances such a move could not have been successful.

Although the Red Army was still holding out in the vicinity of Szolnok, these temporary successes did not result in any favourable psychological or military effect. Having sustained great losses in the battles for the Trans-Tisza region, the army was in total disarray and was unfit for further serious resistance. At the final meeting of the Revolutionary Governing Council, which was attended by party and trade union leaders, Béla Kun submitted his proposal to continue resistance, but was only supported by Béla Szántó and Tibor Szamuely. Social democrats attending the meeting were unanimous in their demand that the Revolutionary Governing Council resign and in this they enjoyed the support of a number of communist leaders as well. The insistence of the few who still advocated resistance stemmed primarily from their loyalty to the revolution rather than from an assessment of the circumstances. The meeting of the Budapest Workers' Council—at which the resignation of the Revolutionary Governing Council and the formation of the Trade Union Government was announced—feted Béla Kun; however, he was now unable to reverse the situation as he had done in May. The last words of the communists, as Béla Kun and President of the Council István Biernann put it, were to vow to restart the struggle once again, and to stage a come-back. After the meeting a group of communist and left-wing socialist people's commissars emigrated to Austria—the Austrian government had guaranteed them political asylum—where, however, they were interned.

As an ignominious epilogue to the struggle, a short-lived trade union government was formed, which promised to guarantee the retention and the peaceful and democratic development of the fundamental achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The trade union government stepped forward to take over power because they gave credence to a promise by the Allied Powers to halt the Rumanian troops before they entered Budapest; they would thus have had an opportunity to realize their real goal, the restoration of bourgeois democracy. The course of events was finally settled by the fact that on 4 August the Rumanian troops marched into Budapest. With this the government's hands were tied. Under the shadow of the Rumanian military presence hasty steps were taken to broaden popular backing by trying to win over the bourgeoisie and the landed peasantry. Accordingly, the government turned its back on its previous promises and started to dismantle the achievements of the Republic of Councils, and to disarm the workers. However, all these efforts turned out to be futile. On 6 August a counter-revolutionary coup, supported by the Rumanian troops, ousted the trade union government. It now became clear that the social democrats had misjudged the situation: a defeated socialist revolution could not be followed by bourgeois democracy, only counter-revolution, and a reign of white terror.

The Working Class Movement in Hungary during the Horthy Era. The Struggle against Fascism and the War

Hungary after Two Revolutions

The defeat of the Republic of Councils was followed by a brief period of utter uncertainty in Hungary. The Gyula Peidl government, which had replaced the Revolutionary Governing Council and has made up of trade union officials wielded no power whatsoever. The greater part of the country was occupied by Rumanian troops. In the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza, as well as in Transdanubia, Miklós Horthy's extreme right detachments were carrying out mopping up operations. Czechoslovak troops were stationed in the northern part of the country, Yugoslav forces stood ready for action in the south. The political situation therefore varied in the different parts of the country. The occupying forces—although they were unanimous in their resolve to stifle socialist revolution—differed in their behaviour towards the civilian population.

The most blatant atrocities were committed by Horthy's so-called National Army.

Made up of former career officers and non-commissioned officers from the old "Imperial and Royal" army, these detachments combed the Great Plain and Transdanubia. The groups under the command of Pál Prónay, Gyula Ostenburg-Moravek and Iván Héjjas staged terrible massacre. The village leaders under the Republic of Councils were their principal targets. However, they also murdered countless people purely for personal reasons. The anti-Semitism of these officers was also unbridled, there were large numbers of Jews amongst their victims, many of whom had taken no part in political activity whatsoever. News of the massacre staged by the terrorist detachments soon spread beyond the borders of Hungary.

The situation in the part of the country occupied by Rumanian troops was also grievous. Here many communists were murdered and the Rumanian troops plundered unhindered. The parts of Hungary occupied by the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav armies were in a slightly better position.

The post of prime minister was taken over by István Friedrich, a right-wing political adventurer. However, real power was not in the hands of the government. Up to mid-November this was exercised by the Rumanian army and, following the withdrawal of the Rumanian forces, the reins of power were taken over by Horthy and his henchmen.

Horthy was the choice of the Allied Powers who had picked him out from among a number of rival political groups. Horthy's principal merit was his blind anti-Communism. He was accepted as leader by the officer corps and the old civil

service. Both the Allied Powers and the forces of internal counter-revolution regarded him as the "strong man", who would guarantee that communism would not recur in Hungary.

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was followed by the emergence of new states out of the ruins of the former Great Power.

The territory of the former Empire was now under the authority of seven different countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Austria and Italy). The new situation was put on record by the peace treaties of summer 1920. The former belligerent powers signed the peace treaty with Hungary on 4 June 1920 at the Trianon Palace in Versailles.

Under the Trianon Peace Treaty the territory which had formerly constituted Hungary (excluding Croatia) was reduced from 282,000 square kilometres to 93,000 square kilometers; the population dropped from 18,000,000 to 7,600,000. Some 3,000,000 Hungarians found themselves beyond Hungary's new frontiers. The size of the army was set at 35,000, recruitment based on conscription was prohibited and the country was obliged to pay reparations.

The peace treaty was a serious blow to broad sections of Hungarian society. Hundreds of thousands—and in particular civil servants—fled from the annexed areas to Hungary where, for long years, they were unable to find either accommodation or employment. These masses fell under the influence of extreme right-wing organizations and became the supporters of fledgling Hungarian fascism. The forces of counter-revolution in Hungary exploited the Trianon Peace Treaty for their own purposes. For a quarter of century they used it as a scapegoat for every social ill. In official jargon post-Trianon Hungary was simply referred to as "Mutilated Hungary". In schools the concept of Hungary as comprising the territory before the peace treaty was taught. Maps continued to show earlier territory and designations, suggesting that the new frontiers were temporary. An unbridled propaganda campaign was conducted for the regaining of the lost territories. Broad masses of the public responded to this propaganda. It was above all through this propaganda drive that the regime was able to gain supporters among certain sections of the working people.

During 1920 political conditions consolidated to a certain extent. The counter-revolutionary regime, which was to rule Hungary over the next quarter of a century, established its organs of power. The regime embodied the power of three groups of the ruling class: 1. Industrial and finance capital; 2. The landed aristocracy; 3. The civil servant and military officer group who originated from the gentry. Naturally, all three groups had their own particular interests and co-operation was by no means untroubled. Yet this alliance continued to exist for twenty-five years and was able to ensure the oppression of the working masses.

The Working Class

The working class was in considerable disarray following the defeat of the revolution. The capitalists used the switch from war to peace-time production to purge the big industrial plants and remove revolutionary workers.

On the basis of the 1920 census the size of the working class was estimated at 600,000 or 18 per cent of all active earners. Of these 460,000 were in mining and industry, approximately 60,000 in commerce and 80,000 in transport. The majority of industrial employees worked in small workshops. Typical of the most widespread industrial occupations—shoemakers, tailors, stone-masons, carpenters, locksmiths and bakers—was that they were in small-scale enterprises.

The regional distribution of large-scale industry became even more disproportionate than it had been. Large-scale industry was confined to Budapest and the vicinity, the mining regions and three major provincial towns, Miskolc, Pécs and Győr. In the other big towns workers were only employed in the service and food industries or in transport.

All the social welfare measures introduced by the Republic of Councils were abolished after its defeat. (For instance wages were cut by half.) The situation of the working class was aggravated by unemployment, which accompanied the cessation of war production, as well as the rapidly growing inflation.

Following the defeat of the Republic of Councils and the ousting of the Peidl government, the fate of the whole legal working class movement in Hungary hung in the balance. Miklós Horthy and his supporters would have preferred to ban all workers' organizations. For them not only the communists were "reds", but the right-wing social democrats as well. Revenge on the working class became official government programme, and revenge was not confined to the revolutionary wing of the working class movement, but extended to the entire working class, indeed the majority of the urban population.

The Legal Working Class Movement in the Twenties

Even in its defeated state the working class movement constituted a force to be reckoned with, a force that could not simply be eradicated from the Hungarian political scene. This was recognized by those foreign (primarily British) politicians who strove for the establishment of a lasting, consolidated counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary, which would be able to ensure long-term uninterrupted capitalist production and, not least, the interests of foreign capital. This required a stable internal situation, which would have been impossible in the case of a complete ban on the working class movement.

The politicians of the Allied Powers and the Hungarian ruling class hammered out the following political conception: they would, under strict supervision, allow the functioning of the Social Democratic Party (MSzDP) and the trade unions on condition that staunch anti-communists be made their leaders. These people

would then be used to help consolidate the regime, with perhaps even the allocation of one or two ministerial portfolios to them. The communist party and the revolutionary wing of the working class movement would be outlawed, the campaign against them legalized (hence Act III of 1921 under which communist activity even carried the death penalty). In a working class movement divided in this way membership of the Social Democratic Party was tolerated, but being a communist counted as a crime. Naturally, it was clear to the architects of the regime that the working class would not rally behind the counter-revolutionary government. Under the circumstances, it, therefore, seemed easier to consolidate the political situation in the country with the presence of a controllable opposition rather than with a full ban on the entire working class movement.

It was therefore along these lines that the working class movement in Hungary developed after the First World War. On 24 August 1919 the Social Democratic Party was reorganized and its daily newspaper, *Népszava*, appeared regularly despite frequent persecution. The MSzDP had its own premises in workers' hostels, where they could meet regularly, where applications for membership were accepted and where MSzDP leaders could hold rallies. Strongly interlinked with the MSzDP, the trade unions were legally recognized organizations which collected membership fees, elected officials and had their own headquarters and even some money. From 1922 onwards social democrat Members of Parliament began to appear in Parliament. As a result, the party was able to reach the broad working masses. If a worker agreed with MSzDP policy there was nothing to stop him from joining the party. (At least this was so in Budapest and the major towns. In the provinces local public administration ruthlessly obstructed the operation of the party.) Since the overwhelming majority of trade union members were also members of the Social Democratic Party, MSzDP membership rose to over 200,000 by the early twenties.

The communist party was in an entirely different situation. Since being a communist counted as a crime there was no question of the Hungarian Party of Communists being able to function under conditions like those of the MSzDP. The KMP had no daily newspaper of its own, nor did it have its own premises. Its leaders—who faced the death penalty if caught—had to go underground. There could be no question of holding rallies. In case where a worker decided to take the risk of imprisonment and join the KMP, it was very difficult to do so, for the party was nowhere to be found. The Hungarian Party of Communists had only very limited means of getting their message to the workers: pamphlets produced in small numbers on duplicating machines, publications printed abroad and smuggled home at tremendous risk, together with the skill of individual communists in taking advantage of the legal opportunities. Under the circumstances no realistic comparison can be made of the actual mass influence of the MSzDP and the KMP. Such a comparison giving a realistic idea of the political views of the Hungarian working class movement could only have been made if the two parties had functioned under identical conditions. The MSzDP's mass influence spread to hundreds of thousands, whilst the communist party was backed only by a few thousand

workers, with only a few hundred members working in its underground network. (Roughly the same number of people would be serving prison sentences for communist activity.) Another factor which must be taken into consideration is that, through no fault of the member, Communist Party membership was often interrupted. When, for instance somebody's identity became known to the police the party was forced to break off all contact lest the police track down other communists as well. For this and other reasons connected with secrecy, the KMP's composition often changed, and there was great fluctuation.

The reconstituted Social Democratic Party differed from the party which merged with the Hungarian Party of Communists on 21 March 1919 in many respects. The best known leaders of that party did not participate in the reorganization. Ernő Garami, Zsigmond Kunfi, Vilmos Böhm, Sándor Garbai and Manó Buchinger were in exile. Prominent left-wing figures such as Jenő Landler, József Pogány and Jenő Hamburger had become communists and, living in exile, turned all their energies to reorganizing the KMP. Still others, such as Dezső Bokányi, Péter Ágoston, József Haubrich and Antal Dovcsák, were in prison, from which they were freed by the government of the Soviet Union in exchange for Hungarian army officers who had become prisoners of war in Russian hands.

The MSzDP was now led by people who had belonged to the group of middle-level officials prior to the revolutions; they had shown animosity towards the victory of the Republic of Councils and had carried out anti-communist activity even while the Republic was in being. Károly Peyer (1881–1956) and Illés Mónus (1866–1944) were the MSzDP's two most prominent leaders.

In addition to Peyer and Mónus, István Farkas, Lajos Kabók and János Vanczák also played an important role in the MSzDP leadership during the early twenties. All came from working class background and rose rapidly through the trade union ranks, eventually turning into social democratic politicians. Their theoretical capabilities were fairly limited.

Before the Social Democratic Party could take its place in the political arena of the Horthy regime it had to settle a number of issues which had given rise to problems during the years of the white terror. Tens of thousands of social democrat workers were, for instance, languishing in various internment camps, although no charges had been laid to them. The question of MSzDP participation in the parliamentary elections was also unclarified, among other things. (In the 1920 elections the MSzDP abstained because of the mass terror.) These and other unresolved questions were settled at talks held at the end of 1921 between MSzDP leaders and Count István Bethlen, who became Prime Minister in April that year. The results of these talks were incorporated into a document that later became known as the Bethlen–Peyer Pact.

Under the Pact the government agreed to allow the MSzDP to function legally and to be represented in Parliament. It also promised to free the imprisoned social democrats. As their part of the bargain, the MSzDP leadership undertook to support the foreign policy aims of the counter-revolutionary government and to use their links with the major Western European socialist parties to get the Horthy re-

gime "accepted" internationally. They agreed to refrain from reorganizing the railway workers', postal workers' and civil servants' unions which had been abolished immediately after the defeat of the Republic of Councils.

Peyer and his associates later rendered services to the government which, considering their objective impact, can, without exaggeration, be branded as betraying the workers' interests. It would, however, be one-sided to attach too much importance to these acts. The activities of the Social Democratic Party were characterized primarily by the fact that it was the most important democratic party on the Hungarian political scene. For twenty-five years this party was the sole legal political organization of the Hungarian working class, the rallying ground of tens of thousands of class-conscious workers. From time to time they denounced steps taken by their leaders to co-operate with the government. Since, however, the very same leaders organized strikes and demonstrations on other occasions, and sometimes took resolute steps against the government, the workers continued to support and re-elect them.

The Social Democratic Party's chief historical feat was that it did a great deal to organize workers and to educate those under its influence in the spirit of working class solidarity, while at the same time teaching them certain elements of socialist ideology. The MSzDP's greatest mistake was that it did not wage a consistent struggle against the counter-revolutionary regime.

During the early twenties the Social Democratic Party had the support of the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian working class. This was borne out by the outcome of the 1922 parliamentary elections. This was the first time in Hungary's history that the party was able to take part in an election. Although the majority of workers did not have the vote and there was no secret ballot in some of the constituencies, the MSzDP gained over 270,000 votes. In Budapest it took 40 per cent of the votes—and 56.3 per cent in the industrial belt outside Pest. The MSzDP gained twenty-five seats in Parliament. The vast majority of the *petite-bourgeoisie* and the intelligentsia also voted for the MSzDP at the election. In most towns the social democrats gained a far greater number of votes than the number of workers who actually voted in the election.

The MSzDP, however, was unable to maintain a lasting influence. Four years later, in 1926, the number of votes was down to 126,000 and only reached the 50 per cent mark in one single community. Several factors contributed to this set-back. At the 1926 elections the *petit-bourgeois* masses gave their votes to their own political parties. The political regime had been consolidated, and there was no longer any hope that the western powers would replace Horthy's dictatorship with a bourgeois democracy. Infighting within the working class movement, the activities of left- and right-wing opposition, the emergence of separatist tendencies and discontent with Peyer and his associates also contributed to the MSzDP's poor electoral performance. Nevertheless, the MSzDP took 30 per cent of the votes in districts where the secret ballot was in operation. On the basis of this figure, which in essence remained steady (throughout the entire Horthy era), it would appear that the workers remained solidly behind their only legal political party.

The Reorganization of the Communist Party

Whilst the Social Democratic Party was becoming an important factor in official Hungarian political life, the Hungarian Party of Communists was making great efforts to reorganize its ranks. At the time of the defeat of the Republic of Councils the party, which had been formed on 21 March 1919, had not yet split up. However, the events which followed that defeat, the forming of the Peidl government, and the reconstitution of the MSzDP on 24 August 1919, made it clear that the social democrats regarded the document on the merger as null and void. The communists were now confronted with the task of re-forming their own party.

This was extremely difficult. Thousands of communists were murdered during the white terror. At the end of 1919 Ottó Korvin, Jenő László and other party leaders who had remained in Hungary in order to reorganize the party were executed. Tibor Szamuely was killed at the Austro-Hungarian frontier. Thousands of communists fled abroad, among them the party's most prominent leaders—Béla Kun, Jenő Landler, Georg Lukács, József Révai and János Hirossik.

The reorganizing of the party began from the top and bottom simultaneously. On the one hand, communists, who had stayed behind and were now living underground, sought contact with each other and tried to establish underground party organizations. This was an extremely difficult task requiring great caution and circumspection; therefore stringent rules of secrecy had to be followed.

The basic party organizations were called cells. One cell comprised three or four communists. A go-between (whose real identity remained unknown to cell members) kept in touch with the cells. When even the cells lost contact with the underground communist party—because the go-between had been arrested—the cell remained without contacts. (These cells were not counted in the membership.)

While the first underground communist cells were being formed in Budapest and in a number of parts of the country, Hungarian communist leaders in Vienna made efforts to set up an executive body. A Central Committee was established by the early twenties with Béla Kun, Jenő Landler, Georg Lukács, János Hirossik, Jenő Hamburger and others as members. The Central Committee brought out the first communist newspaper in Vienna; it helped refugees to find work and accommodation, organized campaigns to help free imprisoned comrades and worked out the party's political line. First and foremost, however, it strove to establish contact with the underground—and for the time being leaderless—cells in Hungary. To this end Central Committee members occasionally returned to Hungary illegally and stayed for a few months until another Central Committee member took over. (Frigyes Karikás, Georg Lukács, Sándor Poll, Imre Sallai and József Révai were among those Central Committee members who spent varying periods of time in Hungary.)

As a result of this work a network of communist cells slowly and gradually emerged. It was primarily from the trade unions and the Social Democratic Party organizations that workers suitable for underground work were chosen. (Naturally this meant that most members of the illegal communist party were at the same time

also members of the legal MSzDP.) Cells were also formed in the big industrial plants in the provinces. In 1921, for instance, there were communist cells functioning in a number of big industrial plants in the vicinity of Pest and in a few mines. The Hungarian Federation of Young Communist Workers was also reorganized. From 1924 onwards the Hungarian Red Cross, who extended aid to political refugees, became an independent organization.

The large number of Hungarian exiles living in various countries gave substantial assistance to the work of the KMP. After the defeat of the Republic of Councils most of them fled to Austria. The Republic of Austria guaranteed political asylum to persecuted Hungarians of every political tendency. However, since only very few people were able to find employment there because of the local economic situation, many Hungarian refugees moved on. There was a large group of Hungarian exiles in France, where there were greater opportunities for employment, especially in the mines. Still others settled in the United States or Canada. Several thousand Hungarians lived in the Soviet Union, they were mostly prisoners of war who had struck roots there over the years, had married, and established a living for themselves and did not want to return to Hungary. Their ranks were swelled by the four hundred political prisoners and their families who were freed under the 1921 agreement on the exchange of prisoners. A large number of persecuted communists from the underground movement also settled in the Soviet Union.

Although Hungarian political exiles represented various shades of the political spectrum, the left wing was unquestionably dominant. There were several thousand people who sympathized with the communists and were ready to give various services to the communist party.

Like every other communist party in the world at that time, the Hungarian Party of Communists was a member (or section to use the contemporary terminology) of the Communist International which had been founded in 1919. During this period the international communist movement was characterized by a great degree of centralization and strict discipline, voluntarily undertaken. Resolutions adopted by the Communist International were binding on every communist in the world. At the helm of the Communist International stood a collective leading body, the Executive Committee, which comprised representatives of the international communist movement. The Executive Committee was elected by a congress at which every communist party was represented. The congress defined the most important issues of the policy of the Communist International. Initially the congress met annually, later only at greater intervals. (There were six congresses between 1919 and 1928.) Executive Committee members were often replaced. Hungarian communists took active part in this supreme body of the international communist movement. Béla Kun, for instance, was a prominent member of the Communist International, first in his capacity as head of the Executive Committee's Agitation and Propaganda Department and later as head of the Balkans Secretariat. Jenő Varga was the Communist International's principal economist. Mátyás Rákosi was a secretary of the Communist International during the early twenties. Lajos Magyar was

a specialist on Chinese affairs, whilst Gyula Alpári edited the official Communist International organ, the *Internazionale Presse-Korrespondenz*, published in Berlin.

The Communist International regularly gave help to the Hungarian Party of Communists. It gave advice as to the policy which should be pursued, took part in the settling of disputes and adopted resolutions regarding the choice of officials. The KMP, which had permanent representation in Moscow, the seat of the Communist International, became involved in the activities of international solidarity and the shaping of general Communist International policy. On the whole, this policy correctly expressed the fundamental interests of the international working class, although from the mid-twenties onwards, policy was dominated by sectarianism. This was manifest in the over-simplification of the processes taking place in the world and the emergence of a view of the world based on polarization in which nothing existed apart from the antagonistic worker and capitalist. The erroneous conclusions which were inevitably drawn from this simplistic view of the world caused considerable damage to the international communist movement, including the KMP.

In reality, however, the sectarianism of the KMP's policy was not the result of external pressure. Arising out of its own position, the Hungarian communist movement was included to harbour sectarian trends. Among other things this was due to the fact that it was a persecuted political force, that it had to operate underground and that it had absolutely no chance of influencing Hungarian politics by legal means, consequently, Hungarian communists not only agreed with the sectarian directives which came from the Communist International during the twenties and thirties, but they themselves exerted a similar influence on the Comintern leadership. To pit the image of the "sober Hungarian party worker" against the "sectarian Comintern" in assessing the Hungarian communist movement is therefore not in accord with the actual facts.

The Struggle of the Communists in the Legal Workers' Organizations

The Communist Party strove to reach the broadest possible masses—despite having to work underground. Accordingly every outlet was utilized: the trade unions, workers' cultural associations and sports clubs. Naturally, communists acted as private individuals in these organizations and not as representatives of the communist party. They represented their individual opinions and put forward their arguments accordingly. Since the KMP accepted among its ranks workers who commanded authority within their own community, the party's influence grew and party members were surrounded by a large circle of party sympathizers.

A particularly favourable opportunity to strengthen legal work arose in the spring of 1925. At this time the most left-wing section the MSzDP membership turned against their party leaders. The full text of the Bethlen-Peyer Pact had been published shortly before this causing great indignation. Many MSzDP members left the party. The leaders of the KMP thought that the time had come to form a

new party from the MSzDP defectors and to obtain official recognition for this party. Naturally this new party would not call itself "Communist", nor could it come forward with a communist programme. Its leaders could not be communists known to the police. But, with suitable ingenuity, it could be made into a political party in which workers who sympathized with communist ideas could rally.

This was how the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) came into being in April 1925, under the leadership of a construction worker, István Vági (1883–1940).

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party fought in the first place for a democratic republic, land reform, the release of political prisoners, the eight-hour working day and the establishment of diplomatic links with the Soviet Union. These views were put forward at meetings which often had to be interrupted because of official harassment. The party was not able to get permission to publish a regular newspaper. In order to reach the workers, it had to resort to pamphlets, published under various titles. Nevertheless, its appeals evoked a response. Powerful MSzMP organizations were formed in Budapest and the vicinity, the major provincial towns and the villages of the south-eastern "Stormy Corner" (a centre of social discontent and upheaval). The MSzMP was the first Hungarian political party to demand the distribution of landed estates and the allocation of the land to the peasantry. As the MSzMP had been founded primarily by workers who had relinquished their former MSzDP membership, the two parties were on rather bad terms. The MSzMP launched a powerful attack on the MSzDP over the Bethlen–Peyer Pact and its co-operation with the Horthy regime. The MSzDP described MSzMP leaders as "Moscow's agents".

The founding of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party notwithstanding, the Hungarian Party of Communists retained its illegal cells which functioned separately from the legal party. Although the MSzMP leadership was in communist hands and the underground party directed some of its members to join, there were communist party members who were barred from the work of the MSzMP. This was a security measure as the possibility that the police would discover the real nature of the MSzMP and arrest its leaders had to be reckoned with. And the KMP had to carry on its struggle regardless of what happened to the MSzMP.

As it turned out, the precautions were justified. In 1927 the police arrested the leaders of the MSzMP, and they were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. As a result of persecution the party was defunct by 1928. However, by this time a comparatively large group of communists had been educated; later these filled important posts in the illegal Communist Party.

By the time the MSzMP dissolved, the KMP had built up a nation-wide network. Communist organizations were particularly strong in Budapest and its suburbs (Angyalföld, Ferencváros, Újpest, Rákospalota, Csepel, Kispest, Pesterzsébet) and in Salgótarján, Győr, Szeged, Szolnok, Mezőtúr and Kaposvár. The party organizations in Hungary were controlled by a three- to four-member Secretariat. Based mostly in Vienna, the Foreign Committee maintained contact with Hungarian communists in exile and the Communist International, the party's journal

Új Március (New March) was also published in Vienna. Together, the Foreign Committee and the Secretariat constituted the Central Committee, other members of which included the KMP's representative to the Communist International (in Moscow), as well as the leader of the Hungarian Federation of Young Communist Workers and Red Aid. The Central Committee was made up of a total of between ten and fifteen people; primarily because of the frequent arrests, the composition of the leadership often changed.

The Impact of Consolidation on the Working Class Movement

By the mid-twenties the Horthy regime had consolidated both economically and politically. The consolidation of the regime, which took about ten years and was generally linked with the name of the Prime Minister of the time, István Bethlen, was interlinked with the international consolidation of capitalism and the economic boom which followed the war.

This period marked a temporary set-back for the working class movement in Hungary. There were several reasons for this set-back. One was that the *petit-bourgeois* strata who had joined the revolution in large number left the movement. Nor was the movement able to strike deep roots among the village poor, the agrarian proletariat. It was also weakened by infighting: the particular interests of certain trades and strata of workers conflicted with the general interests of the working class as a whole. One reason for the set-back was the Peyerist policy of the MSzDP leadership which failed to satisfy the demands of the radical elements of the working class, causing consequent disillusionment and discontent.

In statistical terms, trade union membership dropped from over 200,000 in 1922 to 125,000 in 1925. The decline came to a stop at this point and trade union membership remained essentially unchanged up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

It must be pointed out that in the context of contemporary Hungarian conditions this figure is by no means a low one and stands up well even to international comparison. The Hungarian working class was almost as organized a workforce as that of the advanced European countries. The majority of the skilled workers in the major industrial centres remained loyal to their organizations. The majority of Budapest ironworkers, printers and construction workers stayed in their unions. By the mid-twenties ironworkers had a membership of 31,000, construction workers a membership of 17,000, timber workers' one of 9,000, printers' one of 7,000, while white-collar—private sector—membership was at 7,000, and shoemakers and tailors had a membership of 3,000 each. But membership of the mining union declined steeply from 17,000 in 1922 to 4,000 in 1926. Semi-skilled workers and agricultural labourers were very poorly organized. (Railway and postal workers were debarred from all trade union activity.)

The communists took an active part in trade union work. As a result, many communists were elected to leading posts in their unions. Communist influence was

particularly strong in the construction workers' union, among the timber workers, shoemakers and tailors and the clerical unions, as well as in the diminished miners' union and the precious metalworkers' union.

Trade union work focused primarily on the protection of the economic interests of the memberships. The unions fought firmly and resolutely against wage cuts and demanded wage increases instead. This struggle took on various forms. Sometimes negotiations between union leaders and the employers' representatives proved to be adequate, resulting in the conclusion of collective contracts. In these, wages, working hours, overtime and social welfare benefits, if any, were defined. When negotiations proved inconclusive the trade union called for a strike. This was a rather complex and often double-edged weapon. Naturally, the employers did not pay wages for working time lost through the strikes. In such cases the trade unions had to pay strikers out of their own resources: a lengthy strike could prove a serious burden on trade union assets. (And of course strike pay was far lower than regular wages.) Therefore any question of strike action had to be given careful consideration. Generally speaking, the unions only resorted to strike action when the state of affairs in a given trade had become intolerable and the workers were willing to go without pay, perhaps for several weeks. Another factor to consider was that if the strike failed embittered workers were very likely to abandon their trade union in large numbers. Employers often sacked workers who took part in strikes and who thereby lost even their meagre livelihood.

In spite of this the trade unions did stage numerous strikes during the period under discussion. Special mention must be made of the successful miners' strikes of the early twenties, and the recurring strikes by ironworkers, construction workers, shoemakers and chemical industry workers. The strikes usually ended with a compromise agreement.

In addition to organizing the struggle for higher wages, the trade unions supported working class culture, initiating courses where the participants could enrich their general, professional and political knowledge. Trade union support was given to lively cultural events. The workers' cultural clubs formed at the beginning of the century were enjoying a revival, staging theatre performances and cultural evenings at which they disseminated socialist culture. The various sports clubs also played an important role: the Workers' Physical Training Association for instance, or the Nature Lovers' Tourist Association, or the sports section of the ironworkers' union. Other organizations were also formed: The Workers' Esperanto Association, the Anti-Alcoholics Association. In addition to helping workers adopt a healthy life-style the above-mentioned organizations also introduced their members to works of progressive cultures (including Soviet culture which was banned in Hungary). They offered workers, who had very little free time, a wide range of meaningful activity. (One of the centres of this movement not far from Budapest was a water works at the village of Göd on the banks of the Danube, which became a veritable haven for the working class movement.) Understandably, the communists took part in these organizations and played a leading role in some of them.

Making use of the legal opportunities offered by the regime the labour movement

was able to publish comparatively large-circulation newspaper during this period. In addition to *Népszava*, the daily of the MSzDP, a theoretical journal, *Szocializmus* (Socialism), also appeared. All the major trade unions published newspapers and the Trade Union Council's own paper, *Szakszervezeti Értesítő* (Trade Union Bulletin) came out monthly. Naturally, the communists were in a far more different position. Nevertheless they, too, managed to put out their own publications. Under a government decree no special permission was required from the authorities for a publication which came out no more than ten times a year. Therefore, in 1927, the Communist Party launched *100%*, a journal edited by Aladár Tamás. Under various pseudonyms, *100%* published articles by Béla Kun, Jenő Landler, Georg Lukács and József Révai, as well as works by the communist poets László Gereblyés and Antal Hidas. The Communist Party's theoretical journal, *Új Március* (New March) was published in Vienna in 1925–33. The communist exiles had their own Hungarian-language publications in every major country. The *Sarló és Kalapács* (Hammer and Sickle) in Moscow, the *Párizsi Munkás* (Parisian Worker) in France and the *Új Előre* (Forward Again) in the United States all advocated communist ideas.

It was not possible for the KMP to print a newspaper in Hungary. So the communists created a network of illegal printing presses. In practical terms this meant setting up a duplicating machine in a flat, where the party's paper, the *Kommunista* (Communist) and the communist youth organization's paper, the *Ifjú Proletár* (Young Proletarian), were prepared. The printing presses were often moved from one place to the other. It was through the cell network that the duplicated publications reached party members and sympathizers.

Relations between the MSzDP and the KMP were very bad at this time. Károly Peyer and his associates rejected any kind of co-operation with the communists. If they came across communist activity in the trade unions and other workers organizations they expelled the initiators and indeed often notified the police as well. The MSzDP leadership argued that the communists were posing a serious threat to the legality of the working class movement. For their part, the communists sharply condemned this policy. They described the MSzDP leadership as traitors and paid agents of the bourgeoisie.

Contemporary documents reveal that although a great deal of space was devoted to the antagonism between the social democrats and the communists in the press of the two parties, in ordinary everyday working life this hostility was not nearly so significant.

Workers including both social democrats and communists fought shoulder to shoulder in the class struggles which took place in the factories and trade unions. Though they argued over some questions, there was consensus among them over the fundamental issues. Nevertheless, the struggle between the two parties held back the development of the working class movement and caused considerable damage.

The Working Class Movement during the Great Depression

In 1929 the capitalist world was engulfed by a crisis of overproduction of unprecedented magnitude and extent. For lack of demand, the commodities produced were destroyed, despite the fact that people needed them. To sell below cost price was not a lucrative undertaking for the capitalists, who discontinued the production of goods which they could no longer sell, sacking their workers. This in turn reduced purchasing power still further and consequently an even greater number of goods became superfluous. This was indeed a vicious circle, as a result of which some thirty-three million people became unemployed in the developed capitalist countries alone.

Hungary, too, was hit by the Great Depression. In industry, 230,000 out of a workforce of 660,000 lost their jobs. Add to this the number of white-collar and agricultural workers and the total number of people out of work reached the half a million mark.

The Hungarian worker had no savings to help tide him over. Even when he worked he lived from hand to mouth, not earning enough to save. The loss of his job placed the Hungarian worker into a desperate position. As there was no unemployment benefit, he depended entirely on various charity organizations for food and occasional benefits.

The rapid deterioration of the condition of the working class led to the sharpening of the class struggle. The country became the scene of bitter mass struggles.

In their own particular fashion both working class political parties joined the struggle to alleviate the consequences of the Great Depression. The MSzDP, which was allowed to function legally by the Horthy regime, strove to improve the situation of workers within the existing legal limits. Social democrat Members of Parliament submitted draft legislation for the introduction of unemployment insurance. This, however, was rejected. In addition, *Népszava* demanded a legal solution to this problem in countless articles.

The Communist Party chose other forms of struggle. Mass rallies were organized and the unemployed were called on to take to the streets. A semi-legal organization was set up to help organize the struggle. Called the National Committee of the Unemployed, this organization was run by communists and unemployed persons of no party affiliation, who did propaganda work at the meeting places of the unemployed, calling on these despondent people to take action. They organized street demonstrations. Shouting the slogan "We demand bread and work!" masses of unemployed workers marched through the busy streets of Pest. In the spring of 1930 several demonstrations of this kind took place in Budapest. On each occasion the demonstrators clashed with the police and there was considerable bloodshed. The movement also spread to the provincial towns.

Demonstrations organized by the National Committee of the Unemployed mobilized thousands and drew the attention of public opinion to the question of unemployment. As a result, the situation of the unemployed improved slightly. Bodies of local public administration — primarily in towns located just outside Pest

and in the provinces—allocated some aid (fuel for the winter, small amounts of flour or potatoes) to those in need. Elsewhere relief work was organized: the unemployed built dikes and repaired roads—for minimal wages.

The growing number of demonstrations against unemployment prompted the MSzDP leaders to change their tactics. Deciding on firmer action, they called on the masses to take to the streets on 1 September 1930 and protest against growing poverty “with a silent and peaceful demonstration”. The KMP, which also joined the demonstration, called on the people to stage a militant demonstration rather than a silent one.

On 1 September 1930 some 150,000 people marched to the City Park. Ignoring orders from the MSzDP leaders, the demonstrators shouted communist slogans: “Down with Horthy, Down with Bethlen!”, “Give us work and bread!”, “Long live the Soviet Union!” Smaller groups were formed in each of which a communist addressed the demonstrators.

The police did not stand idly by. Mounted police charged the demonstrators with swords. The toll: one dead, some eighty seriously injured and several hundred injured slightly. Clashes with the police took place in a number of provincial towns as well.

This demonstration showed the strength and willingness of the Hungarian working class to fight against the Horthy regime. It also made it clear that the Communist Party was a force capable of influencing the masses. Since the demonstration did not follow the line which the social democrat leaders had envisaged, the MSzDP did not organize any more of its kind and magnitude during the years of the Great Depression. There were in fact a number of demonstrations in this period, but these were organized by the KMP. Obviously arising as they did from the initiative of an illegal party, these were, of necessity, smaller in scale than what could be organized by a legal party, such as the huge demonstration of 1 September.

Soon, however, a new opportunity arose for the MSzDP to strengthen its mass influence.

The year 1930 witnessed the intensification of organizing work on the part of the social democrats in the countryside. Previously, the MSzDP had neglected the rural areas. The risks were too great, the chances of success too slim. Provincial officials—public notaries, gendarmes, and chief constables (the chief administrative officer of a Hungarian county up to 1945)—declared people with social democratic sympathies to be “reds” and treated them just like the communists. The official social democrat daily, *Népszava*, was banned from news-stands, and whenever the authorities discovered signs of social democratic organization the leaders and members were taken to the gendarme post where they were beaten up. People with social democratic sympathies also lost their jobs.

The impact of the Great Depression was even greater in village than in town. At any moment discontent could trigger off activities which had unpredictable consequences. The government therefore decided to diffuse the mounting tensions by channelling opposition into the MSzDP, which, as the government was well

aware, would not stray from the path of legality. The counties were issued with instructions to tolerate the setting up of MSzDP organizations.

The effect of this measure was that Social Democratic Party organizations were established in the provinces with astonishing speed. Whereas previously the MSzDP had struck roots only in the industrial towns and mining settlements, now social democratic organizations proliferated in the villages as well. Agricultural workers who had previously been passive as far as politics were concerned (including many peasants with communist sympathies who were unable to establish contact with the communist party), now joined the Social Democratic Party in large numbers.

These developments took both MSzDP leaders and the government by surprise. The Minister of Home Affairs issued instructions to the authorities ordering a clamp-down on the organization. As a result MSzDP headquarters were soon flooded by desperate letters describing the brutal persecution of party activists. The MSzDP decided to take firm action in defence of its organizations. Members were called upon to form delegations in every community which had an MSzDP organization of its own. These in turn were to call on the leading official of the local administration on 7 April 1932 and to hand over a memorandum of protest.

In fact, 7 April 1932 did indeed go down as a famous day in the annals of the class struggle. On that day a total of some 200,000 workers went on strike and memoranda were handed over in more than one hundred communities. Although in most places this was carried out peacefully, in a few towns and villages handing over the petitions turned into a powerful demonstration in the course of which workers clashed with the authorities.

After the events of 7 April 1932 the MSzDP leadership decided that the radicalism of the peasantry had gone too far, exceeding the boundaries which they, as a parliamentary opposition, deemed desirable. Accordingly, the MSzDP leadership bowed to government pressure and withdrew from the villages. In less than two years the village MSzDP organizations faded into oblivion. Later this was to have serious consequences: the politically illiterate agricultural proletariat masses who were demanding radical changes were taken in the demagogy of the Arrow Cross parties in the second half of the thirties.

During the Great Depression the KMP had to work under even more difficult conditions than before. The party organized a great many acts of protest. Members took part in street demonstrations as a regular thing and worked in the unemployed movement and the MSzDP organizations. Consequently, the police came to know them and arrests became more and more frequent. In the course of 1930 alone, for instance, there were six instances of arrest involving Central Committee members.

In September 1931 the blowing up of the railway viaduct at Biatorbágy near Budapest provided the government with a pretext to introduce martial law. This meant that a number of crimes which had previously carried a prison sentence, were now punishable by execution by summary procedure.

Under martial law, the leaders of the underground Communist Party also faced

the death penalty if they were caught. Whereas previously Communist Party members were given sentences of between two and three years imprisonment, while leading members were sentenced to between eight and ten years, now, under the new regulations, the latter faced the death sentence.

At this time the KMP leadership was made up of Ferenc Huszti, Sándor Fürst, Károly Kiss, Frigyes Karikás, Sándor Poll, Imre Sallai and Pál Sebes. The secretary of the communist youth organization, György Kilián, was also a member of the Central Committee. Central Committee members took turns in heading the Foreign Committee, which was based in Vienna, and the Secretariat, where the headquarters were located in Budapest. Generally speaking, two or three Central Committee members took turns in spending three months in Hungary, then returning to Vienna and changing places with those working there.

In July 1932 the security police raided the flat in which the illegal Secretariat was operating. Here they arrested Sándor Fürst, Frigyes Karikás, György Kilián and Imre Sallai. In spite of strong protests both at home and abroad, on 29 July 1932 Imre Sallai and Sándor Fürst were sentenced to death by a court of summary jurisdiction and executed on the very same day.

Changes within the Ranks of the Working Class

By the mid-thirties, substantial changes had taken place in the composition and living conditions of the working class. The structure of industry had changed. Whilst during the early twenties the vast majority of the industrial workforce was employed in iron manufacture and mechanical engineering, by the mid-thirties, the textile industry had caught them up. It was the only branch of industry to undergo dynamic development under the Horthy regime, even during the years of the Great Depression. As a result, the proportion of skilled workers fell while that of semi-skilled and unskilled workers increased. There was also a substantial increase in the proportion of the female workforce: whereas prior to the First World War, less than 20 per cent of factory employees were women, by the mid-thirties women accounted for 33–34 per cent of the factory workers. The upward trend in the employment of women was the result not only of the growth of the textile industry, but also the growing demand of the iron and engineering industry for labour (in the iron and metal industry, for instance, women accounted for 28 per cent of the workforce). Whereas previously skilled male workers constituted the most powerful group within big industry, now uneducated and semi-skilled workers accounted for the overwhelming majority of employees.

Workers employed outside industry—in commerce, transport and public service—occupied a special position, as did domestics. In 1930 this category totalled over 460,000 (the number of industrial workers at that time was 660,000). The situation of workers in transport and public service was determined by the fact that they were in state or institutional employment. This meant they enjoyed certain privileges and they were less threatened by unemployment. Both railway workers and

the municipal public health employees were entitled to retirement pensions — a special privilege at that time. To safeguard their security, these strata strove to adjust to the demands of the state. Unorganized, they were open to *petit-bourgeois* influence. Domestic workers (mostly young girls from the countryside who sought employment), who accounted for between fifteen and twenty per cent of the urban proletariat, constituted the most vulnerable stratum of the proletariat. They too were unable to make contact with the working class movement.

Around the mid-thirties the annual average wage in the manufacturing industry was 1,200 pengős. This could be higher in branches of industry where workers were organized in unions (in the engineering industry it was 1,500 pengős; in the printing industry, 2,300 pengős), whilst in the poorly organized or unorganized branches they were usually lower (in the textile industry, 900 pengős). Wages in Hungary were among the lowest in Europe.

Social welfare legislation was only in force from the mid-thirties onwards. Hungary was the last country in Europe to introduce the eight-hour working day; also, it was at this time that, for the first time, workers were given a week's paid holiday and the family allowance was introduced. The general change in living conditions, technological development and urbanization naturally affected the way of life of the Hungarian working class as well. Average life expectancy increased and there was a slight improvement in health care. Generally speaking, illiteracy disappeared amongst the urban proletariat. Consumer durables, such as, for instance, the bicycle (which the vast majority of urban workers used as their means of transport since they still could not afford to travel by tram) became widely used. Working class families in the higher income brackets began to buy radio sets (there were 420,000 of them in 1938). Active participation in sports or visiting sporting events became a popular recreation for the workers. It was at around this time that working youth were able to afford regular visits to the cinema. The increase in free time was accompanied by the spread of tourism and hiking. Habits of dress also changed. By the late thirties, the difference in the everyday clothes of the worker, the *petit-bourgeois* and the intellectual disappeared, particularly amongst young people.

These changes stemmed from the sweeping alterations in lifestyles throughout the continent of Europe. The overwhelming majority of Budapest workers lived in single-room flats, only half of which had electricity. Their staple diet comprised bread, potatoes and bacon; meat consumption had gone down by comparisons to the pre-war levels. The consumption of vegetables, fruit, dairy products and sugar was very low. The consumption of alcoholic beverages increased: in addition to wine, various hard liquors were sold in growing quantities, whilst the consumption of beer remained almost unchanged.

Working class wage differentials affected the schooling of working class children. Whereas skilled workers employed in the leading industries (mechanical engineering, telecommunication, optics) sent their children to secondary schools (to the so-called higher elementary school or to grammar school), the children of the majority of workers only completed six years of primary school education.

Under the special conditions in Hungary the religious denomination of workers was also of a certain significance. In the major industrial centres 65 per cent of the workers were Catholic and 25 per cent Calvinist and Lutheran, while 10 per cent were Jewish. A person's religion was stated on every personal document and entailed certain advantages or disadvantages. It was compulsory for children to attend religious education classes and attendance at church services was stringently supervised. Employers tried to exploit religious differences to stir up antagonism among the workers. The conflict between Jews and non-Jews was in particular strongly emphasized.

During the thirties the process of assimilating national minorities among the workers of Hungary continued to strengthen. The German national minority, which had been a decisive element within the working class at the turn of the century, became almost fully integrated. The second and third generation of workers who had emigrated to Hungary in the course of industrialization spoke Hungarian better than the native tongue of their fathers and grandfathers; they went to Hungarian schools and considered themselves Hungarian. It was only around the Budapest area, in a few mining settlements and in minor provincial towns that there were significant groups of workers belonging to national minorities at this time. The assimilation of Slovak workers in the vicinity of Pest had in particular made progress. Nevertheless, national minority status went together with a certain degree of consciousness of identity which also had its political consequences. From the mid-thirties onwards, Hitler's propaganda was able to win over a section of the German-born workers in Hungary to Nazism.

This period marked the appearance in industry of a generation of young people who, because of their age, had not taken part in the struggles of the Republic of Councils. Their awareness had been strongly influenced by the education they had received in the schools of the Horthy regime. They had been exposed to powerful and effective chauvinist propaganda which successfully convinced them that the root of all evil was to be sought in the Peace Treaty of Trianon. Anti-communism and hatred of the Soviet Union was part and parcel of this propaganda, which was transmitted to the masses by the schools, the Church and the media. The working class movement, with the very meagre means at its disposal was unable to counter-balance this.

The Working Class Movement and the Rise of Fascism

By the second half of the thirties the Hungarian working class movement found itself in a complex situation. The Seventh Congress of the Communist International, which was held in 1935, drew the lessons from the rise of fascism in Germany on behalf of the whole international communist movement. Breaking with its former policy, which had regarded the social democrats as the communists' number one enemy, the International called on anti-fascist forces to join forces and declared the policy of popular front. The substance of this policy was that the communists'

chief task was to repulse fascism and, to this end, to co-operate with every anti-fascist force—the social democrats, bourgeois democrats and indeed even with religious organizations.

Naturally, the success of this policy did not depend on communists alone. What was needed was that non-communist parties who opposed fascism should accept the hand extended to them.

Internationally, this policy achieved varying results. A number of socialist parties—the French, Spanish, and Italian—were willing to co-operate with the communists. Other parties refused.

The MSzDP belonged to the latter group. Although the Hungarian communists discontinued their attacks on the social democrats after 1935 and concentrated all their efforts on the struggle with the common enemy, fascism, Peyer and his associates rejected all their proposals. Still, the communists fought resolutely for the realization of working class unity: if this was not possible at the highest level, they tried to come to agreement with their social democrat counterparts at trade union level.

Finally, the idea of a joint anti-fascist struggle took hold of the working class. The Spanish Civil War had a particularly powerful influence on this process. Volunteers flocked to the Spanish Republic from every part of Europe to fight against the fascist insurgents. A large number of Hungarians joined them. A division of the International Brigade was headed by Máté Zalka, a Hungarian writer who was living in the Soviet Union at the time and who died a hero's death in battle. Other Hungarian martyrs of the Spanish Civil War were Ákos Hevesi, commander of the Hungarian battalion, Imre Tarr, who went to Spain from the southern Hungarian town of Pécs, and Vilmos Zsinkó, one of the leaders of the communist youth organization. The Spanish Civil War also attracted the attention of social democrats, who made no secret of their sympathies for the republican forces. Trade union membership swelled and so did attendance at party functions. *Népszava* published enthusiastic accounts of the struggle with the fascists—until the Minister of Home Affairs categorically forbade such reports.

This promising development was interrupted by a series of tragic events. In May 1936 the Executive Committee of the Communist International sacked the Central Committee of the KMP (who were in exile in the Soviet Union at the time) and expelled them from the party. These measures were part of a "campaign of purges" conducted in Stalin's name at this time in the Soviet Union. Hungarian communist *émigrés* were collectively branded as being unreliable. This was followed shortly after by mass arrests of Hungarian communists living in the Soviet Union. Those arrested included Béla Kun, a founder of the KMP, Dezső Bokányi, Rezső Fiedler, József Kelen, Gyula Lengyel, József Pogány, Sándor Szabados, Béla Székely, Béla Vágó, people's commissars under the Republic of Councils, István Vági, leader of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party of 1925, the lawyer Ferenc Huszti, the physician József Madzsar, Antal Tisza, a stonemason, and other officials of the illegal KMP. All fell victim to the violations of the law in the Soviet

Union at that time, as did many other comrades. Their posthumous rehabilitation took place after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956.

News of the Moscow trials and the liquidation without trial of the KMP leadership reached Hungary where it was received with incomprehension and gave rise to confusion amongst the ranks of the anti-fascist forces.

After the party was dissolved there was no illegal Communist Party organization in Hungary in 1936-37. It was only in 1938 that the Communist Party was re-organized, largely from new recruits.

The Spanish Civil War and the events which followed it foreshadowed the Second World War. The role their country would play in the coming war was a matter of life and death to the Hungarian people.

Different groups of the Hungarian ruling class gave different answers to this question. As the presentation of every shade of political opinion is beyond the scope of a comparatively short book like this, only the views of the two most important groups are dealt with.

One section of the ruling class advocated co-operation with Nazi Germany. This group was convinced that the Nazis would win the war. They believed that on this issue their interests coincided with those of Germany—who wanted to liquidate the system introduced by the Versailles Treaty—and looked to Hitler for the recovery of lost Hungarian territory. In their view Hungary's place was amongst the victors and, along with them, she must take part in the repartition of Europe.

The Arrow Cross Party embodied the most extreme support for this standpoint. Headed by Ferenc Szálasi (1897-1946), a retired army officer and a muddle-headed maniac, the Arrow Cross Party was founded by the Nazis to serve as their agency in Hungary. With vast financial resources which came from Germany at their disposal, the Arrow Cross Party carried on intensive propaganda. They claimed that they opposed big business and the system of large landed estates and that they represented the interests of common people.

The incitement of hatred against the Jews was an important part of their demagoguery. Exploiting the fact that the vast majority of Hungarian industrialists were of Jewish origin, they created the impression that the struggle against the Jews was synonymous with the struggle against the capitalists. This demagoguery misled a great number of people. The Arrow Cross Party found considerable following amongst the *petite-bourgeoisie* and the peasantry (including the agricultural proletariat). Moreover, they were able to win over a section of the working class as well (especially the uneducated and unorganized workers). At the height of their influence, at the 1939 elections, the Arrow Cross Party gained 550,000 votes, as against the 112,000 votes cast for the MSZDP.

Certain circles of Hungarian finance capital also supported the idea of alliance with Hitler's Germany. This group was led by the banker Béla Imrédy (1891-1946), who later became Prime Minister.

Another section of the ruling class, led by Count Pál Teleki (1879-1941) and Count István Bethlen, were worried by German expansionism. Convinced that

Germany would lose the war, they believed that Hungary ought to remain neutral. Another source of anxiety for this group was the gains made by the Arrow Cross Party as they—justly—feared that through them the Nazis would gain a foothold in Hungary. Accordingly, they did all they could to hinder their activities.

Whilst the Hungarian ruling circles were still hesitant as to what they should do, events took place in Europe which had a fundamental influence on Hungary's fate. In 1938 Hitler occupied Austria and thus became Hungary's neighbour. Not long after Czechoslovakia was partitioned with the approval of the British and French governments. By these actions Hitler gave the Hungarian government an opportunity to annex a part of Southern Slovakia—formerly called Upper Hungary. In November 1938 a 12,400 square kilometres area, with a largely Hungarian population of 1,100,000 was returned to Hungary. In March 1939 another opportunity arose to procure additional territory. Hungarian troops marched into Sub-Carpathia. On this occasion Hungary retrieved a 12,100 square kilometres area with a population of 500,000. In the summer of 1940 the northern section of Transylvania was given back to Hungary—with the assistance of Hitler and Mussolini. This gain involved an area of 43,000 square kilometres and a population of 2,500,000, including a million Rumanians. Finally, Hungary retrieved an area of 11,500 square kilometres from Yugoslavia, with a population of a million, 600,000 of whom were not of Hungarian nationality. As a result of these territorial gains, Hungary's size increased from 93,000 square kilometres to 172,000 square kilometres, with her population rising from 9.2 million in 1938 to 13.7 million. These included approximately 2.5 million non-Hungarians (Rumanians, Germans, Serbs, Slovaks, Carpatho-Ukrainians and others).

The broad masses warmly welcomed these territorial gains, with the feeling that this was just retribution for the injustices which Hungary had suffered under the Trianon Peace Treaty. Only very few of them realized that the annexation of these areas was tantamount to committing Hungary to the cause of Nazi Germany. There was no longer any doubt who Hungary would ally herself with in the event of a war: since it was with Hitler's assistance that she retrieved her former territories it was clear that the day of reckoning would come sooner or later.

Members of the ruling class who would have preferred to preserve Hungary's neutrality could not resist the temptation of territorial gains. They were confronted with an insoluble dilemma. Their chief representative, Pál Teleki, committed suicide. Although reluctantly, his supporters finally decided to join forces with the Nazis.

The Hungarian working class movement was in a difficult situation. For, at the time, even the Communist International described the Treaty of Trianon as a predatory, imperialist peace treaty. Communists had fought against Trianon. Only the injustices of the peace treaty could not be rectified under the "new order" advocated by Germany, without violating the interests of the Hungarian people. This could only give rise to the tragic state of affairs in which the anti-fascist struggle of the neighbouring peoples would be directed not only against the German, but also against the Hungarian occupiers. This, as the communists pointed

out, sowed the seeds of further animosity amongst these peoples. This was precisely what the Nazis were aiming at; they possessed a special talent for exploiting artificially incited hatred.

The territorial gains were accompanied by a general shift to the right in Hungary. This also found expression in the 1939 elections. Yet, the working class movement did not decline during these years. The reorganized Communist Party was gaining strength: large numbers of communists lived in Southern Slovakia, Sub-Carpathia and Northern Transylvania and they now carried out their activities within the KMP. (From their ranks came Zoltán Schönherz, a prominent figure in the Czechoslovak communist movement up to 1938—he lived in Kassa, now Košice; a Transylvanian construction worker Béla Józsa, a member of the Transylvanian secretariat of the Rumanian Communist Party; and Olexa Borkanyuk, a former communist Member of Parliament in the Czechoslovak Parliament who came from Sub-Carpathia.) Thus strengthened, the KMP followed the right policy, striving to increase its influence primarily in the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions.

Conditions for this were now favourable. The rise of the Arrow Cross movement posed a serious threat to the Social Democratic Party. Advocates of concerted effort against fascism became increasingly influential within the party.

It was in the MSzDP youth organization, the National Youth Committee (OIB) that the communists' united front policy first bore fruit. Young communists, above all Endre Ságvári and Gyula Kulich, assumed leadership. The OIB became an important centre of the struggle against the Arrow Cross Party. Also indicative of growing communist influence was the fact that communists were elected to the leadership of several Budapest district social democratic organizations.

Hard-pressed, the social democratic leadership accepted communist assistance. Credit for this must largely go to Árpád Szakasits, who was the first to realize that it was necessary to bring together every trend in the working class movement in the struggle against fascism.

Another important ally of the Communist Party was the March Front, a group formed in 1937 which rallied intellectuals mostly of peasant origin. From this group the National Peasant Party (NPP) was formed in 1939; two of its leaders, Ferenc Erdei and József Darvas, established contact with the communists.

The Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) also opposed Nazism. Reorganized in 1930, this party represented the interests of the middle and wealthy peasantry. Its leaders, Zoltán Tildy, Ferenc Nagy and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, were pro-Western politicians who stood close to the ruling class. Although they rejected co-operation with the communists, they were willing to come to understanding with the MSzDP on certain issues. The Independent Smallholders' Party rallied intellectuals who were afraid of both the fascists and the Communists. It represented significant popular support: at the 1939 election 400,000 people cast their votes for the Smallholders' despite the atmosphere of right-wing terror. Although there were no official links, the communists established contact with individual party members and strove to encourage the anti-fascist forces.

The Working Class Movement during the War against the Soviet Union

On 22 June 1941 the German army attacked the Soviet Union. Nazi Germany counted on a rapid victory. They thought that by the time winter sets in they would have crushed the Soviet army.

The Hungarian government, which at that time was headed by László Bárdossy (1890–1946), shared in this assessment of the situation. Since it entertained no doubts as to Germany's speedy victory it did not want to be left out of the war. Accordingly, on 26 June 1941 Hungary declared war on the Soviet Union of her own accord.

That section of the Hungarian ruling class which followed a pro-British and pro-American line, hoped that the British would look upon Hungary's war against the Soviet Union with "understanding". To their great disappointment they had to accept the fact that both the British and American governments attributed far greater importance to their alliance with the Soviet Union than to their links with Horthy's Hungary. As the military situation deteriorated, the German leadership demanded more and more of Hungary. They demanded more soldiers, bread, raw materials and manufactured goods. The time had come when Germany presented the bill services rendered.

Hungary's entry in the war took the Hungarian people by surprise. Despite the vast war propaganda campaign, no one, except the fanatical Nazi supporters, seriously believed that any kind of Hungarian interests were at stake. It was perfectly clear that Hungarian blood was being shed for a "new Europe" which would be dominated by the Nazis with only a subordinate role assigned to Hungary. Only a very few, however, realized what could be done under the circumstances. The mood of the masses was characterized by passivity and political uncertainty, coupled with the fear of the suffering war would bring.

The war created a new situation for the working class movement. The government's intimidating measures placed the underground movement in a very difficult position. War-time regulations (censorship, a ban on public assembly, the mass internment of persons denounced as unreliable) paralysed the movement. The Arrow Cross Party and the pro-German political parties demanded the outlawing of the Social Democratic Party. The MSzDP's very existence became precarious; it owed its legality largely to the pro-British section of the ruling class which wanted to retain the party "in reserve" in case the Germans lost the war. (This group included Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, the Minister of Home Affairs.)

The pressure on the MSzDP made the party leadership adopt a cautious attitude. They were fully aware that Germany would lose the war. From this they drew the conclusion that the MSzDP's main task was to safeguard its cadres for the post-war period. Accordingly, the MSzDP advised its organizations to avoid any kind of activity which might give the authorities an excuse to ban the party.

The principal goal of the communists at this time was to take Hungary out of the war. The Communist Party slogan, "For an Independent, Free and Democratic Hungary!", was a succinct formulation of the KMP's aims. The communists

strove to rally every anti-fascist force around this slogan: the social democrats, the Smallholders' Party, the National Peasant Party, indeed even the anti-German circles in the ruling class.

This task was by no means an easy one. With the exception of the social democrats, those mentioned above refused even to speak to the communists. On the one hand they regarded them as "Soviet agents" who were to be fought just like the Germans, and, on the other hand, the KMP was a persecuted party and any links with it carried the risk of arrest.

The communists had to find organizational forms which could provide an opportunity for co-operation between the anti-fascist forces. The KMP did come up with a solution—the setting up of a Historical Memorial Committee, ostensibly to cultivate the memory of the 1848–9 War of Independence. The authorities could find nothing wrong with such a patriotic organization. But everyone knew that whenever the memory of these struggles were evoked they also referred to the struggles of the day: instead of the Habsburgs, now it was Nazi Germany which posed a threat to Hungarian independence. The appeal of the Historical Memorial Committee was signed by distinguished scholars, artists and politicians.

Népszava, edited by Árpád Szakasits, became an important forum for anti-fascist resistance. Communist journalists—Gyula Kállai, András Kasztel and Ferenc Földes—also worked for the MSzDP daily. Although heavily censored, *Népszava* nonetheless tried to provide a realistic picture of the hostilities. It refused to publish articles which slandered the Soviet Union. It taught its readers to read between the lines. It also furnished information on the European resistance movement.

The Christmas 1941 edition of *Népszava* was particularly important in the history of anti-fascist struggle. Representatives of every shade of the anti-fascist movement: communists, social democrats, liberals and conservatives, contributed articles to this issue.

As a result of the intensifying anti-German mood in the country, the communists thought that the time was ripe to reveal their opposition to the war. March 15, the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution and the symbol of national independence, served as an excellent opportunity. Everybody knew that Hitler's Germany posed the threat to Hungary's independence. For this reason the communists initiated the staging of large-scale celebrations on 15 March 1942. They invited every group congregated around the Historical Memorial Committee to attend the celebrations. However, at the last minute, the most important of these groups, the Social Democratic Party, decided to stay away.

In spite of this, 15 March 1942 went down as a memorable day in the annals of the independence movement.

The demonstration was followed by a wave of arrests. The political police and the Intelligence Department of the General Staff Headquarters were above all out to round up the communists. They arrested Ferenc Rózsa, a Central Committee member and the editor-in-chief of *Szabad Nép*, the illegal KMP weekly launched in 1942. Rózsa, who refused to give testimony, was killed during interrogation.

The same fate befell the textile worker Károly Rezi, while Zoltán Schönherz, a secretary of the KMP was executed after sentence was passed on him by a special court of the General Staff Headquarters. Several hundred Communist Party members were put in gaol and were given strict prison sentences; many died in death camps in Germany.

The campaign launched by the regime against the communists frightened those left-wing politicians who were carrying on legal activities and who might possibly have become allies of the communists. The Historical Memorial Committee disintegrated. The Social Democratic Party was also hit by persecution. Many social democrats, the majority of the MSzDP's middle-level officials were interned in forced labour camps and taken to the front, from where only very few returned.

During this period Miklós Kállay (1887–1967) was the Prime Minister of Hungary. Kállay belonged to the pro-British and pro-American section of the ruling class. He realized that the Germans could not win the war. Accordingly, his main goal was to see Hungary through the storms of the war and to salvage the Horthy regime for the post-war period. He wanted to avoid an open break with Germany at all costs. Kállay therefore carried out the most important German demands: he endorsed the sending of the Second Hungarian Army (some 200,000 men) to the eastern front, as well as placing the Hungarian economy at the disposal of the German war industry. On the other hand he tried to "secure" Hungary's position in the event of a German defeat. He initiated secret diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain and the United States. Kállay's policy produced temporary results and evoked a favourable response from the working masses. Although the condition of the workers had deteriorated substantially compared with pre-war times (the introduction of rationing, the start of inflation), the situation in Hungary was still better than in the neighbouring countries. Whilst, for instance, the British and American Air Force regularly bombed Germany, there were no air raids in Hungary until 1944. People received their quota of rationed food regularly and workers in the war industries received special issues of food. The overwhelming majority of men of military age were stationed within the country's borders. The normal life of the country continued: offices functioned, there was teaching as usual in the schools, places of entertainment were open and sporting events were held. Although the Second Hungarian Army was wiped out in January 1943, the loss of life—compared with the total population—was substantially smaller than in most other European countries. All of this led the majority of the population to believe that the fate of Hungary was "in the hands of wise men", under whose leadership they only needed to "hold out until the war ended and that what mattered was that things should not get any worse than they were". In essence both the MSzDP and the Smallholders' Party leadership shared this illusion.

The German Occupation of Hungary

By March 1944 the Kállay government was making efforts to conclude a separate peace. The German military command however received exact information as to what was going on and decided to end this state of affairs. On 19 March German troops occupied Hungary.

As officially Hungary was one of Germany's allies, it was not difficult to impart an aura of "legality" to the exercise. Things were made easier by Miklós Horthy, who remained at his post the occupation notwithstanding; indeed he was willing to appoint a government, in accord with German dictate, under the premiership of Döme Sztójay, Hungary's former ambassador to Berlin, who was a puppet of Hitler.

The German occupation made a fundamental difference to the situation in Hungary. Every anti-fascist organization, the MSzDP, the Smallholders' Party, the pro-British and pro-American parties and organizations were banned together with their newspapers. Warrants for the arrest of anti-fascist politicians were issued. Not only were Károly Peyer, Illés Mónus, and Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky arrested, but even the notoriously anti-communist Minister of Home Affairs Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer. Prominent aristocrats, bankers and industrialists were also put in gaol or taken to concentration camps.

A special detachment arrived in Hungary to supervise "the final solution of the Jewish question". Hungarian citizens who were declared Jews were sacked from their jobs and compelled to wear the yellow Shield of David. They were then taken to ghettos. From May onwards people were continuously deported from overcrowded ghettos to the death camps. Once there those unfit for work were immediately executed, while the others were kept alive as long as they were able to work. A few months later they too faced death in the gas chambers. Some 400,000 people deported from Hungary's enlarged territory died in Auschwitz alone.

The German occupation brought radical changes to the people's everyday life. The British and American Air Force began bombing Hungary. From April 1944 onwards not a day went by without the wail of the sirens. The air raids caused serious damage and claimed many lives. As the air raids were concentrated on Budapest and the war industry centres there was an exodus of people from towns to villages.

The bombings disrupted transport and, as a consequence, public supplies. These were also keenly affected by the growing demands of the German army. There was not enough food to distribute for ration tickets. Inflation ran high.

Police raids and identity checks became everyday occurrences. With the exception of those working in the war industry, Hungary's adult male population was conscripted into the army. Those who refused to respond to the call-up faced death. At this time many people had come to the decision that they would not risk their lives for Nazi Germany. Therefore they had to go into hiding and, more important, they needed false papers. By summer 1944 tens of thousands of people lived under assumed names, hiding to evade the call-up or the Anti-Jewish Laws.

The German occupation also created a new situation for the working class movement. The legal working class movement ceased to exist; part of the MSzDP leadership were deported to concentration camps while others went into hiding with false papers. The same fate befell the leaders and activists of the bourgeois left-wing political parties and groups. In short, they found themselves in a situation well known to the communists. However, since the latter had over twenty years of experience in underground existence they were better at adopting themselves to these conditions.

Soon after the occupation negotiations were started with the MSzDP leaders, now in illegality, who had escaped imprisonment, and in the first place with Árpád Szakasits. Other illegal left-wing organizations were also invited to attend these talks. After a common platform had been hammered out, the Hungarian Front, a united organization of anti-fascist resistance, was formed in May 1944. The Front comprised communists, social democrats, smallholders, and the National Peasant Party as well as the Dual Cross Alliance, an organization representing the anti-German wing of the ruling class. In its proclamation the Hungarian Front advocated "a new war of independence, a new popular war" against the German conquerors and their allies. A new feature of the appeal was that the bourgeois political parties relinquished their former rigid anti-Soviet policy which was based exclusively on their hopes for an Anglo-American victory and stated: "the Soviet Union does not endanger, but, rather, protects our independence."

Thus the unity indispensable for effective struggle was formed at the top level of the anti-fascist movement. The trouble was that the party leaders—with the exception of the communists—had lost contact with the masses. On the one hand there were the leaders of the social democrats and smallholders who were in hiding in various private homes, and who held meetings now and again, while, on the other hand, there were the peasants and the intellectuals who were waiting for specific orders. However, it would have required the establishment of an underground organizational network to issue such orders. Only the Communist Party possessed such a network, the other parties had had no experience of secrecy. The communists therefore assumed a leading role within the Hungarian Front. They knew best how to obtain illegal documents and suitable accommodation and in this they also extended considerable assistance to their allies.

As a result of Hungarian Front activity sabotage and go-slows disrupted war production. A growing number of people stayed away from work. Workers in the industrial centre of Csepel—which is part of Budapest—blew up magnesium stocks. By summer 1944 production in the mines dropped by half. The August 1944 report of the Ministry of Home Affairs was indicative of the mood of the population: "All over the country there are growing instances of... slander against the Regent, crimes against the state and social order and incitement against the armed forces, the Constitution, the authorities and their representatives."

By summer 1944 the Soviet Army reached the Carpathians. On 23 August Rumania broke with Nazi Germany and joined the anti-fascist coalition. This

opened the way for the Soviet Army to liberate Hungary. However, Regent Miklós Horthy and his circle still refused to accept the obvious. Without any basis they hoped that Hungary would be occupied by Anglo-American troops who would be willing "to be a bulwark against bolshevism" and to guarantee the survival of their regime.

The communists decided that the time had come to launch armed resistance, despite the fact that for the time being their allies in the Hungarian Front were reluctant on this point. The KMP set up a military committee under the leadership of György Pálffy. In September the first armed combat groups were formed in Budapest and the mining areas. Armed groups also arrived from the Soviet Union to start preparations for a partisan warfare.

On 23 September 1944 the Soviet Army reached Hungarian soil and the liberation of Hungary began. At this stage they faced some 450,000 soldiers of the Hungarian army and a concentration of German forces in the region which was greater in strength than the forces facing the Allies in France and Italy.

By this time Miklós Horthy had also decided to seek a ceasefire with the Soviet Union. His unprepared and half-hearted attempt to make peace, however, was doomed to failure. The Germans removed Horthy and made their unscrupulous puppet, Ferenc Szálasi, "national leader".

This marked the start of a period of Arrow Cross terror. Szálasi had no serious popular backing. The ruling class received with aversion the news that Szálasi, a political adventurer of poor intellectual calibre, had been appointed to lead the country. Even most of the public who had formerly been pro-German, turned against him for, by that time, it had become clear that the Germans had lost the war and the sole purpose of action in Hungary was to gain time, to delay the Soviet Army's advance on Germany. Even the Hungarian right wing considered the country's destruction too great a price to pay to achieve that end. Thus, it was mainly among the *déclassé* elements of society, and the servilely obedient section of the civil servants, and the officer corps who were committed to Germany, that Szálasi was able to find people to carry out his lunatic orders.

At the same time the broad masses of the Hungarian people feared the Soviet Army. This fear stemmed from twenty-five years of constant anti-Soviet propaganda.

To counter-act this fear, the Soviet Red Army issued an appeal to the people of Hungary:

"Hungarians!

In pursuit of the enemy, detachments of the Red Army have set foot on Hungarian soil.

As the Red Army sets foot on Hungarian territory, it is not led by the aim to occupy any part of it or to change Hungary's present social order.

The entry of Soviet detachments into the territory of Hungary has been made inevitable solely by military necessity because German detachments and the armed forces of Hungary, allied to Germany continue to resist...

The Red Army does not come to Hungary, as a conqueror, but as the liberator of the Hungarian people from the German fascist yoke..."

The Hungarian Front made attempt to broaden armed resistance. Talks were started with various military groups in an attempt to persuade certain Hungarian units in a few places to open up the front to the Soviet Army. Talks were also held on the arming of the workers. These negotiations, however, failed to produce results—partly owing to treason and partly owing to the reluctance of the army officers. In the end, the organizing of armed resistance became the task almost entirely of the communists.

The agreement concluded on 10 October 1944 between the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party facilitated the political preparations for armed resistance. Signed by Gyula Kállai on behalf of the communists and by Árpád Szakasits on behalf of the social democrats, the document stated the identity of the views and goals of the two parties concerning every major issue pertaining to the situation of the day. It also contained important provisions concerning the tasks of the post-Liberation era. Among other things it was stipulated that after the war a united workers' party would have to be created.

From 1942 onwards Hungarians who had deserted from the occupying forces and joined the partisans had fought shoulder to shoulder with Soviet partisans in the forests of the Ukraine and Belorussia which were occupied areas of the Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia a Hungarian unit fought against the fascists in Marshal Tito's army—young workers who had made contact with their Yugoslav comrades after an adventurous escape from Hungary. In Slovakia several thousand Hungarian soldiers had linked up with the partisans. Many Hungarians fought in the French and Belgian resistance movements.

Although only on a modest scale, there were people in Hungary, too, who took up arms against the occupiers. There was serious armed resistance in Miskolc, the Tatabánya and Nógrád coalfields and in Budapest.

Altogether thirty-eight partisan groups of varying size and importance operated on Hungarian territory—with about 2,500 people taking part.

National resistance was not limited to armed struggle. It was very important that the fascists be prevented from devastating the country completely. The Hungarian Front made great efforts to sabotage evacuation orders and to save machinery and installations. In this the front could rely on the support of the broad masses. Workers in the Csepel area prevented the dismantling of their factory as did the workers of factories in Miskolc, Ózd and Salgótarján. Miners in the Tata and Dorog coalfields stopped the mines from being devastated. Peasants hid their produce and livestock and refused to leave their villages. The vast majority of the population defied orders to build fortifications: in Budapest the majority of those mobilized did not even turn up at the places designated and those who were taken there soon abandoned the work.

One form of resistance was hiding those who were persecuted—in the first place the Jews. This was quite a dangerous undertaking. Anyone caught harbouring a "wanted" person suffered the same fate—execution on the spot. Yet, there were

thousands of people who took the risk. The Swedish and Swiss governments, through their embassies in Budapest, did a great deal to save the persecuted, as did Hungary's Christian Churches.

Propaganda was another task which involved considerable difficulties. People had to be convinced that the fascist propaganda machinery was churning out lies, that honest people need have no fear of the Red Army. This task was undertaken by those who prepared and distributed illegal pamphlets. The liberation of Budapest had only just begun when *Szabad Nép* (Free People), the Communist Party daily paper, started to appear and reach the people of Hungary.

This activity was organized by the KMP's Central Committee whose leaders at this time included János Kádár, László Rajk, Gyula Kállai and others. It was they who led the struggle which was waged until the first Soviet soldier set foot in a town or village.

From that moment onwards Hungarian communists faced new tasks.

The Liberation of Hungary. The Victory of the Socialist Revolution

The Internal Situation at the Time of the Liberation

The Red Army began the liberation of Hungary in September 1944. As a result of the resistance put up by the Nazis and their Hungarian allies, the operations in Hungary lasted for over six months. In these battles Marshal Malinovsky led the Second and Marshal Tolbukhin the Third Ukrainian Front and Rumanian, Bulgarian and Yugoslav divisions also took part.

The operations of the Red Army were determined by three major battles: 1. The battle for Debrecen in October 1944; 2. The siege of Budapest between the end of December and 13 February 1945; 3. The Operation Lake Balaton, between January and March 1945.

As a result of these operations there were big differences in the situation which developed in various parts of the country. The battle front moved fairly rapidly across eastern Hungary, through the Trans-Tisza region and the southern part of the Great Plain. This means that in these areas the Arrow Cross did not have time to pillage the population and the industrial plants; the only serious fighting took place in the Debrecen area. A number of towns (e.g. Szeged) were liberated almost without a shot being fired. Consequently, by and large life continued normally in this area. Shops opened on the day after the liberation, food supplies were adequate and the public utilities (water, gas, electricity) continued to function. In this region only transport suffered serious damage: wherever they passed, the fleeing Nazis blew up the bridges and destroyed the railway network.

The situation in Budapest was entirely different. In the six-week siege of the Hungarian capital city Soviet soldiers fought from house to house. As a result the city suffered devastating damage: 75 per cent of the residential buildings were damaged, and every bridge between Buda and Pest was blown up. There was no water or electricity and no transport. The streets were covered with rubble and the bodies of the unburied dead. The people of Budapest lived in the cellars. There were no organized food supplies for a considerable period of time. Not a single factory was operating. Some twenty thousand Budapest citizens lost their lives in the siege.

In Transdanubia the town of Székesfehérvár suffered heavily with power changing hands several times. Hostilities raged from 24 December to 23 March and the town was almost entirely destroyed. The situation in Transdanubia was aggravated because Szálasi's rule lasted for almost a full six months in this region. This enabled the Nazis to devastate the region, and to carry off machinery, food and livestock to Germany.

During the first days of the liberation the most important task in the areas which had been affected by the hostilities was to bury the dead, to avert the outbreak of epidemics, to restore the supply of drinking water and to organize at least basic food supplies.

The state apparatus of the Horthy regime collapsed as the Red Army moved in. The majority of civil servants, the staff of the gendarmerie and police fled to the West together with the retreating army.

There was no time, however, to stand idly by. Life had to be restarted and somebody had to assume control.

Life restarts

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, under the Horthy regime the illegal Communist Party had comparatively little organization which operated continuously. But now, at the moment of liberation, it became clear how important it was that the Communist Party had existed in Hungary at all. People who had had even the most peripheral contact with the illegal Communist Party over the past decades became activists: those who had been members of the MSzMP in 1925-7; those who had come into contact with communists in local trade union groups; those who had been reached by communist pamphlets during the war. Those who had fought for the Republic of Councils also surfaced, as did those who had been Russian prisoners of war (1914-18) and who, as marked men, had been forced into passivity for twenty years. A great many people who had formerly worked in the social democratic movement also joined the Communist Party.

Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas, Imre Nagy, József Révai and Zoltán Vas returned from the Soviet Union to direct the work of communist organizations in the liberated area. At the same time János Kádár, Gyula Kállai, Károly Kiss, Antal Apró and László Rajk directed party organizations in the areas still under German occupation. The two party leaderships merged at the time of the liberation of Budapest. In January 1945 Mátyás Rákosi returned from Moscow and became general secretary of the Communist Party.

With a few local exceptions communist activity was based on consistent principles. Their policy continued to be along the lines laid down during the war by the Hungarian Front: it was a policy of joining forces with every anti-fascist force. They appealed to every patriotic Hungarian to join in the struggle to reconstruct the country, to eradicate the remnants of fascism, and to start a new life. In practical terms this meant that the communists encouraged their former allies—the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party and the Smallholders' Party—to form local organizations. (These parties were not prepared for the appearance of the Red Army and in many places they were not even certain whether or not they would be allowed to operate.) The new organs of local government, the national committees, were formed with the participation of these parties; it was they who took upon themselves the complex task of restarting life.

The national committees ensured that life continue at local level. The management of industrial plants was taken over by the factory committees as they were known. For the time being these did not change the legal status of the plant: this remained in private ownership. Since, however, in most cases the owners and the company management had fled the country the factory committees assumed responsibility for the most important tasks linked with the starting of production.

The Provisional Government

The outlines of a leading national body emerged by December 1944. The parties which operated in the liberated areas set up the Hungarian National Independence Front (MNFF) to replace the Hungarian Front. The MNFF's programme, which was adopted early in December and which also became the programme of the Provisional Government, was based on the document which had been released as a draft programme by the KMP on 30 November. The MNFF was formed in Szeged on 2 December 1944 and comprised the Hungarian Communist Party (KMP), the Social Democratic Party (SzDP), the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), the National Peasant Party (NPP), the Bourgeois Democratic Party (PDP) and the trade unions.

The establishment of the MNFF was the first step in the process of creating a new Hungarian state. Because of the failure of Horthy's attempt to take the country out of the war, Hungary was still, at this stage, at war with the Allies and fighting on Germany's side. Obviously, nobody regarded Szálasi and his associates as the legal government of Hungary, nor would anyone have negotiated a ceasefire with them even if they had requested one. A body was therefore needed, which could be recognized by the Allied Powers as representative of the Hungarian people and which would exercise central state power until a new, legal Hungarian government was formed after constitutional elections.

It was vital for the Hungarian people that an armistice be concluded as soon as possible. This, however, required a Provisional National Assembly to elect a Provisional Government which could be regarded by the Allied Powers as a negotiating partner.

The communists and their allies—the national committees—were exceptionally flexible in carrying out this work. In December 1944 they held mass rallies for the election of delegates in forty-four liberated communities, at which deputies to the Provisional National Assembly were elected by acclamation. Those chosen then gathered in Debrecen to elect a Provisional National Government. Out of the 230 deputies present, 71 were members of the KMP, 38 were from the SzDP, 19 from the trade unions, 16 from the NPP, 55 from the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) and 12 from the Bourgeois Democratic Party (PDP); in addition, 19 others with no party affiliation were called on to act as deputies. On 21 December 1944 the Provisional National Assembly proclaimed itself the sole representative of Hungarian state sovereignty and elected a Provisional Government, with Béla

Dálnoki Miklós a former general under Horthy as president. The government was made of three communist ministers, two Social Democrat, two Smallholder and one Peasant Party ministers together with three others who had no party affiliation (including two Horthyite generals and a count).

The participation of the Horthyite generals was justified on a number of counts. On the one hand the anti-fascist forces hoped that their presence in the government would exert a favourable influence over the mostly Horthyite officer corps who were still fighting on Germany's side, prompting them to go over to the Allies. (This hope proved to be false.) Secondly, such a composition in the government relieved the anxiety of that section of the Hungarian population who were afraid of the Red Army. In addition, the interests of Britain and the United States, both members of the anti-fascist coalition, were taken into consideration.

The Provisional Government regarded the conclusion of an armistice agreement with the Soviet Union and her allies as its most urgent task. Signed in Moscow in January 1945, the Armistice stipulated that Hungary would declare war on Nazi Germany; it defined Hungary's frontiers along the pre-1938 lines and determined the sum of reparations to be paid to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia; it abolished fascist legislation and a commitment to punish war criminals was undertaken.

The Provisional Government began the work of organizing a new public administration, a new army and a new police force. The reorganizing of the latter was especially successful. At village level the national committees themselves appointed the suitable people—without waiting for central instructions. The communists who spearheaded this activity, wielded decisive power in this body.

The Land Reform

Among the urgent tasks which had to be dealt with one of the most pressing was to settle the land question.

On 18 March 1945 a government decree "On the Abolition of the System of Large Landed Estates and the Allocation of Land to the People Engaged in Farming" was promulgated. The decree stipulated that arable land owned by traitors and war criminals, industrial and financial concerns must be expropriated and distributed among claimants to land; landed estates over 57 hectares and peasant holdings over 114 hectares were also to be expropriated. (The latter included holdings cultivated by the owners themselves.) The government entrusted the implementation of the land reform to rural committees of land claimants which went about their business with exemplary speed and efficiency, not least because they were familiar with local conditions as well as what people felt to be just. Wherever the military situation made this possible, spring crops were sown on the land of the new owner.

The land distributed included some 470,000 hectares owned by the Roman Catholic Church, 130,000 hectares owned by Prince Pál Esterházy, and a 40,000-

hectare estate owned by Prince György Festetich. A total of about 3,200,000 hectares, or approximately 30 per cent of Hungary's arable land was distributed among 642,000 land claimants, the vast majority of whom were farmhands, agricultural labourers and dwarfholders.

In its results and impact, the land reform amounted to an agrarian revolution. The traditional public administration of the "gentry" was divorced from the new state power, the process triggered off by the forming of the national committees was completed and a new social and political order was established.

Classes and Political Parties

By 4 April 1945 the whole of Hungary had been liberated. The entire country could now come under central government. The Provisional Government moved to Budapest.

Political parties representing every class and strata lined up in the political arena.

The Hungarian Communist Party (MKP) (as it was now known) had the most decisive and clearly defined programme and conception regarding the country's future. At this time the domestic policy of the MKP was to call for the consolidation of people's democracy, the consistent implementation of the land reform and the speeding up of reconstruction. As far as foreign policy was concerned the Hungarian Communist Party stressed its friendship with the Soviet Union and the neighbouring peoples. Apart from the industrial workforce, the communists primarily enjoyed the backing of the agricultural proletariat. The party was led by Mátyás Rákosi and his closest associates included Mihály Farkas, Ernő Gerő and József Révai (just back from the Soviet Union) and János Kádár and László Rajk who had been working in Hungary.

The Social Democratic Party, which at first only found its feet with difficulty, once again became an important factor in Hungarian politics after the liberation of Budapest. The MSzDP abandoned its blindly anti-communist right-wing policy and instead forged a close alliance with the MKP. The domestic programme of the social democrats differed very slightly from that of the communists, and even their foreign policy was only a shade different: in that they gave greater emphasis to solidarity with the West European working class parties (among them the British Labour Party). Support for the MSzDP came primarily from the traditional social democratic strongholds (Budapest and its surroundings and the major industrial towns). Their influence amongst the peasantry was weaker than that of the communists; on the other hand a large number of self-employed tradesmen, retailers and white-collar workers supported them. Árpád Szakasits stood at the head of the party and the MSzDP leadership which worked alongside him consisted of Antal Bán, Anna Kéthly, György Marosán, István Riesz, Ferenc Szeder and Imre Szélig. (Károly Peyer was left out of the party leadership and later left the party itself.)

Almost the entire working class backed these two political parties. Naturally

there were differences: e.g. the miners were communists almost to a man whilst the printers were primarily social democrats. However, the two parties worked together successfully and, thanks to this, a united trade union movement was established which wielded great political power from the very outset. In the leading trade union bodies communists and social democrats shared power on a fifty-fifty basis.

The National Peasant Party was primarily the political party of the poor peasantry and the new landowners. On major issues its radical left-wing programme was identical with that of the communists. Although it was not rooted in Marxism ideologically (there was a marked tendency towards a certain peasant romanticism and nationalism), the National Peasant Party turned out to be a loyal ally of the MKP and the MSzDP in the everyday political struggle. Its leaders were József Darvas, Ferenc Erdei, Imre Kovács, László Nánási and Péter Veres.

The Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) constituted the right wing of the coalition. This role stemmed directly from the party's political past. It had represented the moderate opposition under the Horthy regime. During the war it had adopted an increasingly oppositionist standpoint and finally decided to join the resistance movement. (The founder and leader of the FKGP, Tibor Eckhardt, settled in the United States after the outbreak of the war where he established contact with leading government circles.)

The programme of the Independent Smallholders' Party was based on the principle of private property. The smallholders denounced fascism, and in particular detested the reign of Szálasi and his associates. Although they opposed the Horthy regime as well (although not always consistently) they regarded some of its institutions as acceptable. West European style bourgeois democracy was the FKGP's political ideal.

Consequently, those social classes and groups which were not given independent political representation rallied around the Independent Smallholders' Party. The FKGP was supported by big business, the landowners stripped of their landed estates and the Catholic Church which was influential among the masses. All those who felt that they had something to fear from the new regime gathered under the wing of the FKGP: former civil servants, the vast majority of the intelligentsia and, generally speaking, all those who had been compromised during the Horthy regime.

Yet the Independent Smallholders' Party drew primarily upon the peasantry for its strength. It was the traditional party of the well-to-do peasantry. In western Hungary, however, it enjoyed a monopoly position among the entire peasantry, including the poor peasantry.

In short, the Independent Smallholders' Party was a heterogeneous band in which almost every group of Hungarian society, ranging from the poor peasantry to finance capital, was represented, except the working class. As a result its leadership comprised left-wingers, centrists and right-wingers alike. The left was represented by István Dobi, Lajos Dinnyés and Gyula Ortutay, the centre by Béla Kovács, Fe-

renc Nagy, Zoltán Tildy and Béla Varga, the right by Zoltán Pfeiffer and Dezső Sulyok.

The Bourgeois Democratic Party emerged after the liberation as the representative of the progressive bourgeoisie.

The 1945 Election

By summer 1945 the first achievements of reconstruction could be seen. The Communist Party's appeal to the people to help rebuild the railway network had met with tremendous response. By late summer the railway service had been more or less restored on every line in the country. The bridges, which had been blown up, were replaced by temporary wooden bridges, the majority of passengers travelled in freight wagons—standing—but at least life was getting back to normal. Hundreds of thousands of people left the famine-stricken areas in search of food, primarily in the eastern part of the country. (As money was rapidly losing its value, food could be procured in exchange for their modest valuables.) Dead bodies and rubble had been cleared away from the streets of Budapest; the tram service was restarted, electricity was restored to residential buildings which had not been damaged during the war and once again there was running drinking water. Thanks to the ingenuity of the workers, who often used improvised tools, the factories started to produce goods.

Credit for these successes must go largely to communist initiative. As a result, the Communist Party's authority grew throughout the country.

As only a legal government elected by the entire population could settle the country's legal status a general election was called for 4 November 1945. The above-mentioned six political parties took part in the election, which was, incidentally, the first general election in Hungarian history based on universal suffrage with the secret ballot. With the exception of war criminals and notorious fascists, every Hungarian citizen over the age of twenty was entitled to vote.

In November 1945, 4,774,653 people turned out to vote, and 4,730,409 valid votes were cast. The outcome of the election was as follows:

| Party | Number of votes | Percentage of votes |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Independent Smallholders' Party | 2,697,508 | 57.03 |
| Social Democratic Party | 823,314 | 17.41 |
| Hungarian Communist Party | 802,122 | 16.95 |
| National Peasant Party | 325,284 | 6.87 |
| Bourgeois Democratic Party | 76,424 | 1.62 |
| Hungarian Radical Party | 5,754 | 0.12 |

The Social Democratic Party obtained most of its votes from the industrial belt around Pest—over 30 per cent.

The Independent Smallholders' Party clinched the majority of votes cast in Budapest and won a landslide victory in the counties of Transdanubia. The majority of the peasantry, including the poor peasantry cast their votes for the smallholders, as did most religious believers after a successful propaganda campaign by the Churches. Having no party of their own, the middle class—white-collar workers, freelance intellectuals and small property owners—also voted for the FKGP. Since this party was the most right-wing on the political spectrum, all those who had ties with the old regime and entertained feelings of animosity against change voted for it. Hence the outcome of 57 per cent of the votes on a fairly heterogeneous social and political basis.

The forces of the left, who had expected to do better after the initial successes of reconstruction, were disappointed by the election results. Yet—in the light of what we know today—these results were a realistic reflection of the political situation of the day. The fascist propaganda of the preceding years, the powerful influence of the Church, and the war-time sufferings affected the outcome of the elections. The fact that the three left-wing parties acquired 42 per cent of the vote meant that they could no longer be ignored in decision-making which affected the fate of the country. The fact that the Communist Party, which had had to operate illegally for decades, gained over 800,000 votes after only a few months of legal activity demonstrated that the party had struck deep roots in Hungarian society. The total number of votes cast for the two working class parties was well in excess of the number of workers who voted in the election; a broad section of the agricultural proletariat voted for the MKP, while large numbers of the *petite-bourgeoisie* voted for the MSzDP.

A new government was formed after the election, with Zoltán Tildy, head of Smallholders' Party as Prime Minister. The new government was made up of nine FKGP ministers, four Communist, four Social Democratic and one Peasant Party minister. The new government was recognized by both the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Offensive of the Bourgeoisie

After the election the right wing went onto offensive. On the strength of its electoral success the Independent Smallholders' Party demanded that its officials be appointed to every important posts. As the party had not been prepared for an election victory of this magnitude and did not have enough suitable cadres, a number of people who were unsuited to office and were hostile towards the new state of affairs acquired important posts with the FKGP's assistance.

The Independent Smallholders' Party mounted an offensive at the top-level of politics as well. The objective was to drive the communists from positions of power

and to consolidate a western-type capitalist system which would carry out a pro-American foreign policy.

Under the circumstances this goal seemed within reach. Firstly, the Independent Smallholders' Party had a Parliamentary majority of 57 per cent. Secondly, the position of the bourgeoisie was still strong at this time. For the time being the industrial plants remained in private hands, even though most had suffered serious damage. The country was hit by spiralling inflation. Workers were unable to buy even the basic foods they needed from their wages and their standard of living dropped not only below the rather low pre-war level, but also below that of the worst war years. The enemies of radical social change exploited this situation and agitated against the new regime: "Well, under the Horthy regime at least you had something to eat. Now that the communists are here, there's nothing to eat." They also utilized other consequences of the war against the communists and their allies (e.g. they launched a malicious anti-Soviet propaganda campaign over the question of reparation deliveries). The Church also entered the political arena with a view to turning religious believers against the atheist communists who wanted to close the churches and "to take away God and morality". They pitted Hungarian poverty against American affluence, which was represented in Hungary by parcels from various American charity organizations. Demagogy of this type struck deep roots amongst the politically uneducated masses (the vast majority of the Hungarian people fell into this category at that time).

The Left-Wing Bloc

It is true that at a national level the political parties of the working class failed to win a majority. Nevertheless, they commanded a sound majority in the areas which were most important politically—in the working class districts of Budapest, the industrial belt around Pest and the major provincial industrial centres.

In the spring of 1946, at the initiative of the communists, the Left-Wing Bloc, as it was known, was formed, comprising the MKP, the SzDP, the NPP and the trade unions. This grouping launched a counter-offensive.

The implementation of the land reform gave rise to the first clash. One clause of the 1945 Land Reform Act exempted from expropriation landowners with up to 170 hectares of land, if they had taken part in the resistance movement. After the election, hundreds of land owners filed suits through their lawyers demanding the return of their land on the grounds that they had fought in the resistance movement. They usually won their suits because the judges in the courts were the same judges who had served under the Horthy regime and were biased in their favour. When they won their suits, the landowners returned to their villages to take back "the ancient land". A number of right-wing leaders in the Smallholders' Party supported this trend.

However, the peasants were waiting for them outside their villages armed with hoes and scythes. The landowner (or his steward) was forced to flee and could

consider himself lucky to have got away with it so easily. Nevertheless, that did not settle the matter since there was a "legally binding" court order. Obviously the issue could only be resolved at the political level.

During this period sombre-looking peasant delegations appeared in the streets of Pest, carrying placards bearing the slogans: "We Will Not Return the Land!", "He Who Touches Our Land Shall Die, Or Else We Shall Die!". The workers of Pest extended their fraternal hand to them. On 7 March 1946 the streets of Pest witnessed a procession of unparalleled magnitude. Some 400,000 workers from the factories of Pest and the vicinity marched through the streets to demonstrate their power and determination to defend democratic achievements and to repel the forces of reaction. The right wing of the FKGP was forced to retreat. Court actions to retrieve confiscated land stopped and they were forced to make concessions on a number of other issues as well.

The deterioration of the economic situation, however, made it increasingly difficult to win and retain working class support.

Consolidation

By spring 1946 the work of reconstruction was showing tangible results. The factories were producing goods and the majority of arable land had been sown. However, the country had to hold out until the harvest, and this was becoming increasingly difficult.

Hungary was hit by the greatest inflation history has ever known. To give just one example, compared with the previous month, the 1946 consumer price index rose seventeen-fold in April, thirty-three-fold in May and four million-fold in June. In practical terms this meant that money played almost no part in the exchange of material goods.

There was far less food in Hungary than before the war. Even this was not put up for sale through the normal channels. Peasants refused to sell their produce for money that was losing its value daily. As a result people were literally starving. Obviously, this affected production as well. This gave rise to a vicious circle: the restoration of normal commodity exchange was out of the question as long as there was no resumption of normal production; but that could not be expected so long as the workers had to go without food.

The Hungarian Communist Party broke this vicious circle with an announcement on 1 May 1946 that there would be a stable currency within three months!

The announcement was given a somewhat sceptical reception by the MKP's coalition partners (including the SzDP). Most experts were of the view that a stable currency could not be established without a foreign loan. Under the circumstances, however, this was out of the question.

The Communist Party set up a committee of economists, comprising István Antos, István Friss, László Házy and Jenő Varga. This committee drew up detailed, step-by-step plans for the measures which would have to be taken to accomplish

stabilization. In addition it took steps to ensure adequate commodity, gold and foreign exchange reserves by 1 August, the day the new currency, the *forint*, would be introduced. This they did by procuring the raw materials required for the private industrial sector for gold. They also succeeded in channelling the majority of black-market gold into the vaults of the National Bank.

Taking account of the country's economic situation the new money would be able to ensure 50 per cent of the pre-war wage level. Considering that Hungarian workers had lived under poor conditions even prior to the war, this constituted a very modest level. However, compared with the state of affairs in summer 1946 even this was a vast improvement: it enabled people to buy food and basic articles of clothing.

The appearance of the *forint* on 1 August 1946 was an event to be celebrated. The new money was generally accepted, indeed even the gold and dollar reserves hidden away by the big industrialists and merchants reappeared.

The introduction of the *forint* greatly increased the popularity of the Communist Party and created the most important economic precondition for further progress. But the struggle was by no means over. The major political clashes were yet to come.

The Paris Peace Treaty

The Paris Peace Conference met in August and September 1946, when the draft of the peace treaty to be signed with Hungary was discussed. The right wing tried to exploit this peace conference for their own ends. As anticipated, the price had now to be paid for the policy of the Hungarian ruling classes. An ally of Nazi Germany, Hungary found herself in a position of extreme disadvantage at the peace conference. What the conference had to decide—in the spirit of the Yalta Agreement between the three major powers—was the contribution which Nazi Germany's former allies had made to the victory over fascism. In this respect Hungary lagged behind Rumania and Bulgaria, both of whom had deployed large military divisions against the Germans in the final phase of the war and had lost over one hundred thousand soldiers in the struggle against fascism.

In such a situation there was no question of a favourable decision regarding Hungary's boundaries. Indeed, the peace conference acknowledged the announcement of the Czechoslovak delegation concerning the resettlement of part of the Hungarian population living in Slovakia or rather an exchange of population. The peace conference imposed heavy reparations upon the Hungarian economy and obliged the Hungarian government to pay compensation to the owners of British and American assets destroyed in Hungary.

The Independent Smallholders' Party was eager to exploit the gloomy atmosphere resulting from the peace negotiations, above all by launching a propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union. In reality, however, there was almost unani-

mous agreement between the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States over the Hungarian question.

To demonstrate its popular backing and in response to the huge street demonstrations organized by the two working class parties, the Smallholders' Party called on its peasant supporters to come to Budapest in September 1946 and organize an anti-communist demonstration. The campaign was a failure, however. Instead of the several hundred thousand expected only between fifty and sixty thousand people came to Pest, nor was their mood what Ferenc Nagy and his associates expected.

The mood of the villages was changing. The propaganda campaign carried out by the communists in the villages contributed to this. Each Sunday thousands of communist workers travelled to the villages, helping the peasants to repair their homes and machinery and at the same time conducting a propaganda campaign. The first results of this effort began to show in the autumn of 1946.

The Third Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party

The Hungarian Communist Party held its Third Congress between 21 September and 1 October 1946. The delegates represented 650,000 party members. The congress discussed the country's domestic situation and international position, the party's peasant policy and organizational issues, and elected a Central Leadership.

Two concise slogans summed up the fundamental message of the congress. They were: "Get the Enemies of the People out of the Coalition!" and "We Build the Country for the People, not the Capitalists!".

The first meant that the Communist Party had decided to force the right wing of the Smallholders' Party out of power—to force out those who sabotaged the jointly adopted government programme, constantly provoked crises and tried to turn back the clock. The congress did not actually name anyone. The communists thought that they would decide whom they were willing to co-operate with and who would have to leave the political arena only after the leaders concerned had stated their position. This slogan signified that a power struggle was going on and that paths would shortly diverge.

The second slogan was also clear. Up till now the workers had made great sacrifices to create the fundamental necessities for life. Now that period was coming to an end. Up till now the Hungarian Communist Party had not put forward socialism as its goal as this was not yet timely, but had confined itself to tasks directly related to the work of reconstructing the country. The congress, however, had to state communist policy concerning the prospects of development.

The majority of people—the working peasantry, the *petite-bourgeoisie*, the intelligentsia—were afraid of socialism. As a result of the fascist propaganda, it did not even occur to them that there could, perhaps, be a peaceful way to socialism, in the course of which they would gradually assume control over means of production and state power. It was this peaceful road that the congress decided to embark on.

The congress had a positive effect on the MKP's allies, the SzDP and the NPP. There was great need for communist determination: rifts were beginning to appear amongst the ranks of their allies. Within the SzDP the Peyer group openly spoke out against co-operation with the communists. Although the majority of the party leadership dissociated itself from this group, the relationship between the two parties was not without its problems. The social democrats were dissatisfied with their share of power and, accordingly, strove to obtain majority, particularly in the trade unions. Hence their insistence on the re-election of factory committees. For their part the communists did not regard this as a timely issue because they felt that rivalry and conflict within the working class movement would become fiercer as a result. However, since the leaders of the SzDP stuck to their guns, elections were held in the big industrial plants in January 1947. In the fifty new factory committees elected during the first week the MKP increased its seats from 275 to 408, while the SzDP gained only 72 of its former 146 seats. The social democrats had to face the fact that they had misjudged their strength in the factories.

The sensitivity of the social democrats, who blamed their failures on the communists, was just as bad for working class unity as the anti-social democrat behaviour of a number of communist officials.

There was a certain amount of indecision within the National Peasant Party as well. The slogan of "peasant unity" advocated by the Smallholders' Party had in the first place attracted Imre Kovács, first secretary of the NPP. This slogan was aimed at rallying the agricultural proletariat and the well-to-do peasantry in one camp naturally under the leadership of the latter. In the end, the left wing of the NPP, primarily Ferenc Erdei and József Darvas, succeeded in frustrating this attempt.

The Disintegration of the Smallholders' Party

On 5 January 1947 the newspapers carried a sensational front page story. A statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs reported the liquidation of an anti-state conspiracy. Behind the conspiracy stood former politicians and career army officers of the Horthy regime, who had also carried out a number of military operations. Led by General Lajos Dálnoki Veress, this group aimed at wiping out the people's democratic regime and restoring the Horthy regime.

It was soon discovered that the threads of the conspiracy led to the right wing of the Smallholders' Party. Detectives produced evidence which implicated several smallholder Members of Parliaments. These MPs could only be arrested if the National Assembly revoked their immunity. Accordingly, the Ministry of Home Affairs turned to the National Assembly, requesting that these MPs be handed over.

The MPs of the Smallholders' Party were faced with a serious dilemma. If they voted to lift the immunity of their fellow MPs (some of whom were their good

friends), that section of their supporters which backed the policy of the conspirators would regard them as traitors, and accomplices of the communists. If, on the other hand, they voted against lifting their immunity they would be revealed as the enemies of the people's democracy. In this case they would lose those of their supporters who regarded them as a democratic party (the majority of peasant voters).

The Smallholders' Party was unable to come to terms with this dilemma, and the leadership was beset by confusion.

The Left-Wing Bloc exerted strong pressure on the Smallholders' Party. The MKP was not so much after an action in the criminal courts against the conspirators but rather the political isolation and exposure of the right wing of the Smallholders' Party. The communists demanded that the FKGP expel the conspirators and their accomplices from the party.

The ranks of the Smallholders' Party began to disintegrate, the party leadership expelled a number of MPs, after which fifty MPs left the party. Another sign of disintegration was that smallholder MPs did not present a united front in the National Assembly: the various trends and groups each began to lead their own lives, independently of each other. Those expelled from the party and those who left of their own accord began to form new political parties. For instance, Dezső Sulyok, a lawyer from Pápa and a prominent representative of big business, founded a new party called the Liberty Party. István Barankovics, a politician who represented the interests of the Catholic Church, formed the Democratic People's Party, while the lawyer Zoltán Pfeiffer and his group appeared in the political arena as the Hungarian Independence Party.

All of this was not without its impact on the membership of the Independent Smallholders' Party. The majority of local organizations were paralysed and members left the party in large numbers. The latter had a choice of two alternatives. They either joined the newly formed right-wing parties (as did those under the influence of the Catholic Church in particular), while others—primarily the poor peasants—looked to the Communist Party. At the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947 the number of communists in the village showed a significant increase, especially in counties where the party had not done very well in the 1945 election. The movement to take communist propaganda to the villages, together with the setting up of trade unions to rally the poor peasantry helped forward the process of polarization in the countryside.

People's Democracy and the Churches

After the liberation the Catholic Church adopted a hostile attitude to the new regime. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, for centuries the Churches in Hungary had enjoyed privileges which even the bourgeois democracies would not have granted them. For example, every single Hungarian citizen had to state his or her religion on all official documents.

It was compulsory for all schoolchildren to attend religious education classes. Church-going was also obligatory. Secondly, the Church leadership had established close links with the top circles of the Horthy regime. Obviously the Churches were bound to lose their former status in the new Hungarian state. The Land Reform Act hit the Churches especially: the Catholic Church lost 470,000 hectares of land.

The left-wing political parties did not launch an ideological struggle. On several occasions the MKP and the SzDP declared that they would respect the religious feelings of believers and would guarantee freedom of religion. Wherever they saw damaged churches, activists in the communist village movement helped to repair them. The Communist Party issued strict orders to its members, and banned all anti-clerical propaganda.

However, when the Church emerged as an autonomous political force, the communists took up the challenge.

The Catholic Church was headed by Archbishop József Mindszenty, the Primate of Hungary; he was so conservative in his political attitudes that from time to time he even came into conflict with the Vatican. Political struggle was triggered off in the spring of 1947 by a seemingly peripheral issue: optional religious education. In practical terms this meant that religious instruction which up till then had been compulsory in the schools would in future be on a voluntary footing. In reality this was merely a pretext on the part of the Catholic Church used to demonstrate that the Church advocated a "hard line", and was the embodiment of the power which opposed the communists and their allies most sharply.

Education was perhaps the only sphere of life where the change in the social order was almost unnoticeable. The majority of pupils continued to attend church schools, and were taught from old textbooks by the teachers of the Horthy regime. The composition of secondary school and university students had remained unchanged: they came primarily from *petit-bourgeois* and middle-class backgrounds. There were hardly any students from working class and peasant families in the higher levels of education.

The situation was gradually becoming untenable. The newly established democracy could not allow the education of the future generation to remain in the hands of its enemies. The struggle for the schools began in earnest.

The National Federation of People's Colleges (NÉKOSz) played an important part in this struggle. Formally an organization with no party affiliation, NÉKOSz drew its support primarily from the MKP and the NPP. Setting up student colleges in abandoned, often damaged buildings, NÉKOSz offered free accommodation and meals to talented youngsters, particularly those from peasant families.

The Three-Year Plan. The 1947 Election

In spring 1947 the KMP and the SzDP submitted their co-ordinated proposals for a three-year plan for Hungary's reconstruction. The aim of the plan was to bring

the national economy up to and perhaps slightly above the pre-war level within a period of three years. The plan envisaged large-scale capital projects which were to be financed primarily by the confiscation of fortunes accumulated during the war and heavy taxes on industrialists and bankers. Although the abolition of the capitalist mode of production was not envisaged, the point of departure was the supposition that the plan could not be realized without the nationalization of the four biggest banks (the National Bank of Hungary, Hungarian Credit Bank, Hungarian Merchant Bank of Pest, Hungarian Discounting and Merchant Bank).

Thus, the country's reconstruction was linked with a general offensive against big business.

The announcement of the three-year plan and the nationalization of the banks increased confusion on the right. The Smallholders' Party had arrived at yet another parting of the ways. Whilst its peasant supporters agreed with the programme of the two working class parties, its bourgeois politicians were sharply opposed to this. The issue of the three-year plan and the nationalization of the banks helped to polarize attitudes within the party. Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy opposed these measures, whilst István Dobi and Lajos Dinnyés supported them.

The debates which erupted over the question of optional religious instruction in schools and the nationalization of the banks were indicative of the grave crisis in Hungarian domestic politics. It became increasingly obvious that the Prime Minister, Ferenc Nagy, would not be able to resolve this crisis: the right wing was dissatisfied because of his concessions to the left, and the left wing was exerting growing pressure because of his commitment to the right. Ferenc Nagy, who was in Switzerland in May 1947, resigned, and announced that he would not be returning to Hungary. This step triggered off a chain reaction.

Nagy was soon followed to the West by Béla Varga, chairman of the parliamentary group of the Smallholders' Party. One after the other the leading officials of Hungarian embassies in western countries who were members of the Smallholders' Party resigned and sought political asylum. Developments in the international situation also played their part in this. In essence the 1945 coalition had been the adaptation to Hungarian conditions of the anti-fascist alliance in global politics. As the Soviet Union's relations with the Western Powers changed, as the spirit of co-operation was overtaken by confrontation, so paths diverged in Hungary as well. Whereas in 1945 representatives of both the workers and big business were able to get along with each other in government, this was no longer possible in 1947. Internal political struggles engendered a shift in the political stratification of the population as well.

Under the circumstances it became obvious that the composition of the National Assembly did not reflect the real balance of power in the country. The holding of a general election was now inevitable. So the date was set for 31 August 1947.

The holding of the new elections took place at a time when confusion ruled the ranks of the right. Whereas in 1945 the right wing had rallied behind the Smallholders' Party, now the ranks of that party were reorganized and the left wing took over the leadership. Now to a much greater extent than previously, the

smallholders ranked as an ally of the parties of the left. The right split into six different political parties; most of these were formed by former smallholder MPs, and one of them represented the right-wing group which had split from the social democrats (Károly Peyer, Imre Györki), who had joined the Radical Party.

Before the elections it was not clear which party the forces of reaction would support. Two political parties, the Democratic People's Party, led by the Catholic conservative István Barankovics, and the Hungarian Independence Party, led by Zoltán Pfeiffer, played the part of the most extreme opposition. The latter claimed to be the true successor of the former Smallholders' Party and campaigned under the slogan "God, Country, Private Property".

The election was preceded by quite sharp clashes during which every party fought against all the others. Nevertheless the main line of division ran between the four coalition parties (MKP, SzDP, FKGP NPD) on the one hand and the six opposition parties on the other.

The election produced the following results:

| Party | Number of votes | Percentage ratio |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| KMP | 1,113,050 | 22.2 |
| FKGP | 769,763 | 15.4 |
| SzDP | 744,641 | 14.9 |
| NPP | 415,645 | 8.3 |
| Democratic People's Party | 820,453 | 13.4 |
| Hungarian Independence Party | 670,547 | 13.4 |

The remaining 460,000 votes were shared among the small opposition parties.

The election results reflected the vast changes which had taken place in Hungarian political life over a period of two years. The Hungarian Communist Party emerged as the indubitable victor of this election. The communists won almost 300,000 more votes than in the 1945 election. And when the results were analysed more thoroughly, it became clear that a large part of those extra votes came from the peasantry.

Compared with the 1945 election results, the SzDP lost 90,000 votes, about the same number as were gained by the Hungarian Radical Party of Peyer and Györki. This did demonstrate however that the SzDP had been unable to rally new support. This brought about fundamental changes in the relationship between the two working class parties. Whereas in 1945 the SzDP gained a larger share of the votes which was a few percent ahead of the MKP, it now lagged behind considerably.

Some 90,000 more votes were cast for the National Peasant Party than at the previous election. The most important gains of the NPP were primarily in the north-eastern counties.

The Independent Smallholders' Party suffered catastrophic defeat, losing almost two million votes. A concrete analysis of the results reveals what caused those losses. The FKGP lost voters in Budapest as well as a sizeable slice of the electorate in the western counties, which were under the influence of the Church. What remained was the core of the party which comprised the working peasantry. The FKGP scored its greatest successes in the eastern counties, the traditional stronghold of the smallholders even before the liberation.

The opposition parties gained two million votes, about as many as the Smallholders' Party had lost. The share taken by the various parties revealed considerable differences. The Barankovics Party, which was the second most powerful party with over 800,000 votes, did well in western counties, but very poorly in Budapest. On the other hand over a third of the votes gained by the Pfeiffer Party were cast in Budapest; and in the provinces, too, that party did well in the first place in the large towns (Szeged, Miskolc).

In short, the 1947 election revealed the balance of power in the country. The four political parties who adopted the programme of democratic development took 60 per cent of the votes. The 40 per cent of the electorate who opposed them were not united; as well as the reactionary parties there were those who were willing to co-operate with the coalition although with certain reservations.

Each political party reacted differently to the outcome of the election. The MKP was satisfied with the fruits of its efforts: the introduction of a stable currency—the *forint*, the successes amongst the peasantry, the drafting of the three-year plan, the aptly chosen slogans and the devoted work of party activists all contributed to this favourable outcome. In the SzDP the electoral losses gave rise to considerable bitterness. The conflicts within the party, between the left wing, led by Marosán and Szakasits, and between the right wing faction of Kéthly and Szélig sharpened. The arguments and confusion which accompanied this weakened the Social Democratic Party still further.

The Start of the Cold War, The Nationalization of the Industry

As we have seen, developments in the international situation had a big impact on the course of political events in Hungary. From 1946 onwards it became increasingly obvious that the alliance established between the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France during the Second World War was falling apart. In violation of the treaties pertaining to Germany, the Western Powers made concerted moves to revive German big business. Using the fact that the United States had the atomic bomb while at that time the Soviet Union did not, the Western Powers tried to blackmail the Soviet Union—who took firm counter measures to ward off this pressure.

The Western Powers also made efforts to reduce the influence of the Soviet

Union in the countries of Eastern Europe and to prevent developments in the direction of socialism.

The inauguration of the "aid programme" under the aegis of the Marshall Plan was a particularly important step from the standpoint of strengthening America's position. Under this programme the American government offered substantial financial aid (in dollars) to the states of Europe to restore their war-devastated economies. In return, the removal of communists from the governments of these countries was asked for. Sixteen European countries accepted these terms. As a result, communists were removed from governments in, among other countries, France, Italy, Belgium and Norway. Civil war had erupted in Greece as a result of Anglo-American intervention. Struggles for national liberation were being waged in Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Burma and Malaysia.

The deterioration of the international situation was not without its affects on Eastern Europe. In the autumn of 1947 nine European communist parties met in Poland for discussions, of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Rumania and the Soviet Union. They adopted a declaration which announced the setting up of Cominform, the Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties. The conference proposed that the communist parties of the participating countries co-ordinate their activity and speed up the process of social transformation in their respective countries.

The resolution encouraged the countries of Eastern Europe to work towards an identical social order, that is, to start building a socialist society as soon as possible. Further, it called on them to conduct a concerted foreign policy, cease in-fighting, turn against the influence of the Western Powers and assert the leading role of the communist party in their respective countries.

The Hungarian Communist Party supported the resolution and strove to shape its policy in accordance with its spirit.

The new Hungarian government formed after the 1947 election—in which Lajos Dinnyés filled the post of Prime Minister—mirrored the election results. The communists held five portfolios, the smallholders four, the social democrats four and the Peasant Party two. The new government began to implement the three-year economic plan.

Immediately after the election the four coalition parties, together with the Hungarian Radical Party which joined them, submitted a petition to the election tribunal. In this they claimed—and were able to verify—that Zoltán Pfeiffer's Hungarian Independence Party had taken part in the elections using a recommendation sheet which carried a number of forgeries. In a resolution passed on 20 November the election tribunal annulled every seat which the Hungarian Independence Party had won in the election. Pfeiffer did not wait for the outcome of the tribunal deliberations and left Hungary for good on 4 November. Meanwhile a nationwide movement built up which demanded the banning of the Independence Party. As a result of mounting opposition and the fact that one after the other the party's leaders left the country, by the end of 1947 the Hungarian Independence Party, the country's most right-wing political party, had disappeared from the political scene.

Signs of disintegration began to appear in the Barankovics Party as well. Although this party had won the vast majority of the Catholic vote, it was unable to come to an agreement with Cardinal Mindszenty, Hungary's Archbishop Primate. Because of the conflicts between the Church leadership and the leadership of the Barankovics Party, the clergy withdrew their support from the party. After this, the organizations of the Barankovics Party, most of which had been set up during the election campaign, rapidly fell apart. The party leadership, too, was affected by these developments. Many left the party altogether. At the same time, the minor opposition parties took steps to establish contact with the coalition.

There were changes in the leadership of the Independent Smallholders' Party as well. By the beginning of 1948 István Dobi's poor peasant wing had assumed a leading position. This wing comprised left-wing intellectuals such as János Gyöngyös, Gyula Ortutay, József Bognár and Ernő Mihályfi. The party accepted people's democracy as one form of socialist society. As the new leadership saw it, the FKGP now had the task of joining the other democratic forces in an effort to build a new society and to help the peasantry and the democratic *petite-bourgeoisie* find their place in this new society.

This regrouping of the political forces in Hungary created a clear-out situation. Substantially weakened, the right wing no longer posed a serious obstacle to democratic development. Since big business had been defeated in the political struggle, steps could now be taken to eradicate its economic position as well.

In November 1947 the National Assembly passed legislation on the nationalization of the major banks. As the majority of Hungarian industry and commerce was taken over by the nationalized banks, 60 per cent of the mining and manufacturing industry passed into public ownership. Although state ownership did not yet signify unequivocal socialist ownership, the slogan "The Country Is Yours, You Are Building it for Yourselves!" was an apt expression of what was happening.

The decisive step towards socialism came with the nationalization of factories employing over 100 workers. The two workers' parties made meticulous preparations for the introduction of this measure. It was of paramount importance that the plan be kept secret as otherwise factory owners would have had time to salvage their assets, to destroy their business accounts and to prevent production from continuing normally. With the help of the trade unions the two workers' parties picked out those workers whom they regarded as suitable managers for the factories.

The Merger of the Two Working Class Parties

The speed up of revolutionary development in the autumn of 1947 made it clear that the merging of the two working class parties could not be delayed for much longer. Developments both inside and outside Hungary made this an urgent matter. Domestically, the Hungarian working class could not afford to waste their energies on constant rivalry. Internationally, the Social Democratic Party

was faced with a dilemma. It now had to decide whether its sympathies lay with the social democratic parties of Western Europe, or with the workers' parties of the countries which had chosen the path of socialism.

A fierce debate erupted within the SzDP over this issue. The right wing blamed the communists for the SzDP's election losses and, in connection with this, launched an anti-communist campaign within the party. Anna Kéthly was the leading right-wing figure in the SzDP at this time. This highly influential politician, who had been a prominent social democrat even under the Horthy regime (she had been an MP) undertook the role of protector of the old Peyerist political line instead of Károly Peyer himself as he was debarred from the party. In addition to Kéthly, Imre Szélig, a locksmith, the secretary of the social democratic organizations in the vicinity of Pest, became another prominent figure in the SzDP right wing.

In October 1947, at a session of the SzDP's party Executive the right wing demanded that the left-wing leaders be ousted and that the SzDP break with the policy of co-operation with the Hungarian Communist Party. The idea that the SzDP should dissolve itself as a gesture of protest was also raised. The left wing led by Árpád Szakasits and György Marosán, launched a counter-offensive in response.

The Budapest SzDP organization was the stronghold of the left wing. In December 1947 the Budapest Executive Committee decided to endorse the policy of the left wing. In February 1948 Anna Kéthly, Ferenc Szeder, Imre Szélig and Antal Bán were ousted from the party leadership.

At the beginning of 1948 a rapidly growing number of SzDP members decided to switch to the Communist Party. In point of fact this amounted to a referendum over the issue of a merger, which had been proposed and urged by the Hungarian Communist Party. By February the flow of social democrats to the Communist Party reached such proportions that the MKP Political Committee was forced to order a temporary clamp-down on new membership.

The SzDP met in congress on 6–8 March 1948. This congress resulted in complete victory for the left wing. The resolution adopted at the congress stipulated that the new party leadership begin "talks immediately with the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party with a view to creating the ideological, political and organizational conditions necessary for the forming of a united workers' party. As a result of these talks, the new party leadership should ensure that a special congress be convened as soon as possible to establish a united party of the working class."

A liaison committee comprising leading members of the two parties was formed to implement the merger. First the basic party units would merge so that by the time of the unification congress which was set for mid-June, the delegates would be elected by united party organizations.

On 24 April 1948 the process of merging started in six big Budapest industrial plants. The two parties held a joint party meeting, where they announced the merger and elected a united committee.

On 2 June 1948 the Fourth Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Thirty-Seventh Congress of the Social Democratic Party passed a resolution proclaiming the merger of the two parties. The First Congress of the new party, the Hungarian Working People's Party (MDP) was opened on the same day. The congress endorsed the manifesto of the new party, which stated that the MDP was a Marxist-Leninist party and regarded the building of a socialist Hungary as its objective. The congress elected the leading party bodies. Mátyás Rákosi became general secretary and Árpád Szakasits chairman. The posts of three deputy general secretaries were filled by Mihály Farkas, János Kádár and György Marosán. Within the Central Executive and the Political Committees the communists and the social democrats accounted for two-thirds and one-third of the members, respectively, which reflected the balance of power between the two during that period.

The forming of the Hungarian Working People's Party marked the end of thirty years of Hungarian history, an era during which a divided working class wasted part of their energies on infighting. The forming of a united workers' party meant that the Hungarian working class had now become the indisputable leading force nationally.

This opened up a whole new chapter in Hungarian history.

Socialist Development and its Achievements. Distortions in the Policy of the Hungarian Working People's Party (1948-1956)

The International Situation at the End of the Forties

While the people of Hungary were rebuilding their country, events took place on the international scene which were to have serious repercussions on Hungary's own political life.

During this period the United States, under the presidency of Harry Truman, was striving to prepare a preventive war against the socialist countries, and above all the Soviet Union. American war circles based their determination to wage such a war on their superior strength, which at that time was indeed overwhelming. In 1948 production in the United States, Western Europe and Japan accounted for 72 per cent of the total world industrial output, while the share of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries was a mere 16 per cent. Moreover, the United States possessed the atomic bomb, whereas the Soviet Union did not.

America made every effort to pose unacceptable demands to the Soviet Union—from this "position of strength". The German question was a particularly sensitive issue. The Western Powers had abrogated the 1945 Potsdam Agreement which had provided for the establishment of a united, democratic and peace-loving Germany in the aftermath of the war. They set up the Federal Republic of Germany unilaterally in 1949 in their own occupation zones and channelled the new country's war potential into their own arsenal. They made the "liberation" of the people's democracies part and parcel of their official policy.

These developments forced the socialist countries to allocate a substantial proportion of their resources to strengthening their own defences. The Soviet Union made particularly great efforts in this respect, speeding up the development of her nuclear and missile industry. The efforts bore fruit: the first Soviet atomic bomb was successfully tested in 1949.

The socialist world responded to military, economic, diplomatic and ideological pressure by joining forces, by strengthening the unity of the international communist movement. A precondition of unity amongst the European people's democracies was the normalization of relations at the bilateral level. This was by no means an easy task. Former, traditional conflicts (national minority and boundary disputes) had to be eliminated. Between 1947 and 1948 all the Eastern European countries concluded bilateral agreements of mutual friendship with each other. (It was within the framework of these that, among other things, the problems pertaining to the population exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary were settled). The socialist countries were now able to take concerted action in the inter-

national political arena, adopting identical standpoints with regard to major domestic issues as well. Since the internal situation in these countries differed substantially, an identical response to vastly different questions hindered the assertion of national characteristics and gave rise to erroneous imitations and distortions.

This attitude caused exceptionally grave damage to the relationship between the people's democracies and Yugoslavia.

In the spring of 1948 a dispute broke out between the eight communist parties which belonged to the Information Bureau and the Yugoslav Communist Party. The dispute embraced crucial issues pertaining to the building of socialism and to the relationship between the socialist countries. In June 1948 the Cominform adopted a resolution which condemned the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party for underestimating the role of the party, for neglecting the collectivization movement in agriculture, and for the appearance of nationalist views.

The way in which the resolution criticized the Yugoslav Communist Party—calling on Yugoslav Communists to dismiss their leadership—was not to be tolerated in the relationship between communist and workers' parties.

The Yugoslav Communist Party's rejection of the criticism triggered off a wave of mutual slander. In the course of this mud-slinging campaign the eight communist parties which belonged to the Information Bureau committed a most serious mistake; in November 1949 they adopted a resolution which accused the Communist Party of Yugoslavia of betraying the cause of socialism, and of restoring capitalism.

This conflict with the Yugoslav Communist Party became very serious under the influence of the Stalinist personality cult. Stalin had great authority in the international communist movement and in international public opinion.

He had been at the helm of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1922. His name had been linked with the great victories of the Soviet Army in the Second World War. And his name had been the symbol of hope to those living under Nazi occupation. His calmness and sense of sober reality during the Cold War years made a profound impression. Communists throughout the world regarded Stalin as the leader of the socialist world.

The grave mistakes committed by Stalin were not sufficiently known amongst the communists and the workers of the socialist countries. His name was not associated with the trials at which a multitude of innocent people had fallen victim to tyranny. They were not aware that Stalin completely disregarded the principle of collective leadership and kept decision-making in his own hands on every major issue. It did not occur to them that not only the successes and victories, but the fiascos and defeats too were closely linked with Stalin's person. They did not realize that the entire system of the personality cult—which was established by Stalin—substantially discredited the idea of socialism and reduced its appeal.

Stalin's assertion that class struggle sharpened constantly in the course of building socialism caused particularly serious damage, as did the tenet that it was amongst its own ranks that the communist movement should seek its enemies. This tenet gave rise to the spread of suspicion and lack of trust within the communist move-

ment which not only caused human tragedies, but serious damage to the relationship between the individual communist parties and the masses as well.

The dispute with the Yugoslav Communist Party was also characterized by an atmosphere of distrust. Since the Yugoslav leaders opposed Stalin's views they were declared traitors.

Soon the conflict between the people's democracies and Yugoslavia began to affect relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia. Trade between Hungary and Yugoslavia was paralysed and Hungary discontinued reparation deliveries to Yugoslavia. Both countries carried out large-scale troop concentrations along their frontiers and before long armed border incidents also took place.

All of this had far-reaching consequences for the situation within Hungary.

The Setting up of the Independence Front

By summer 1948 the question of political power in Hungary had already been resolved. Nevertheless, the forces of reaction were still making a last desperate effort to fight back.

It was over the nationalization of church schools that the sharpest struggle broke out. At the beginning of 1948 there were still 5,437 primary schools, 98 teacher training colleges and 113 grammar schools in the hands of the Church; and some 18,000 teachers taught in them. The nationalization of the schools was a task that had been accomplished in most European countries during the nineteenth-century bourgeois revolutions.

The proposal to nationalize the schools was violently opposed by ecclesiastical circles. In many places the forces led by Cardinal Mindszenty succeeded in mobilizing the parents of schoolchildren and in provoking demonstrations against the people's democracy. In spite of this on 16 June 1948 the National Assembly enacted legislation on the nationalization of schools. The task of establishing a uniform system of public education had now been accomplished.

Over the issue of the nationalization of schools the Hungarian Working People's Party was supported by both the Smallholders' Party and the National Peasant Party. Only the Barankovics Party opposed the proposal in Parliament. However, this party was quickly isolated. The collapse of this party was precipitated by the fact that József Mindszenty, head of the Catholic Church, was dissatisfied with the party's activity. On the one hand Mindszenty distrusted Barankovics, who had established contact with left-wing circles during the war and even taken part in the work of the Historical Memorial Committee. Mindszenty stubbornly insisted on the restoration of the Habsburg dynasty, which he expected to result from a third world war and from an American military victory in that war. Thus, the Barankovics Party came under attack from both right and left. Realizing that his situation was hopeless, István Barankovics left the country and his supporters in Hungary announced the dissolution of the party.

The Hungarian Working People's Party now thought that the time had arrived

for the launching of a massive campaign against the Catholic right wing. The peasant parties also joined in. The campaign succeeded in turning the tide of public opinion against Mindszenty and people began to demand that he be put on trial. After the police authorities acquired proof of Mindszenty's close contact with the American intelligence centre together with criminal activity concerned with the handling of foreign currency, Mindszenty was arrested in December 1948 and sentenced to life imprisonment in February 1949. (Later on the execution of the sentence was suspended.)

The discovery of several conspiracy and sabotage groups coincided with the Mindszenty affair. For instance one such group operated inside the Ministry of Agriculture, another in the oilfields in western Hungary, which were in American ownership. (This led to the nationalization of industrial plants in American ownership.)

While these struggles were taking place there was a powerful shift to the left in the Smallholders' Party. The party removed right-wing politicians from its ranks —most emigrated to the West, among them former party leader Béla Varga, the Finance Minister Miklós Nyárádi, János Eröss, the Minister of Public Provision, Finance Minister Ferenc Gordon and others, Imre Kovács, one of the most important figures of the National Peasant Party, also left Hungary. Having betrayed their country and political party, these politicians lost their influence in Hungary and stirred up confusion amongst their supporters, most of whom retired from political activity as a consequence.

The peasant parties were thus renewed, both as far as their leadership and their mass backing were concerned. They accepted the MDP's programme, the perspective of socialism. The preconditions were thus created for a popular front type organization in which the leading role of the working class was asserted and the coalition parties played the part of allies.

The MDP leadership changed their stand on the issue of whether socialism would be built in Hungary in the form of a one-party system, or a multi-party coalition. In September 1948 József Révai, the party's leading theoretician, had written: "In Hungary we have a people's democracy, a coalition, there are classes, the distinction between the working class and the peasantry has not faded; under the circumstances by formally abolishing political parties we would not be making any progress at all towards the elimination of the differences between classes." This stand represented a correct assessment of the situation in Hungary.

A few months later, however, the party adopted a new stand.

The leaders of the MDP arrived at the conclusion that they must strive to abolish the coalition parties, to create a one-party system as this was the only feasible road to socialism in Hungary. In formulating this standpoint they drew upon simplistic and one-sided analyses of the historical experiences of the Soviet Union, analyses which completely disregarded historical differences.

The plan to drive the coalition parties from the political scene gradually emerged at the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949. Under this conception the Hungarian Independence People's Front (MFN) was to replace the coalition. Rákosi and his

associates regarded it as the main task of the MFN to become an organization outside which the coalition parties would have no opportunity to operate.

Moreover, they did not ascribe much importance to the people's front itself, either. At the March 1949 meeting of the MDP's Central Leadership, Mátyás Rákosi said the following: "If, Comrades, you thought that the people's front will last long, that it is a permanent formation, you are very much mistaken. This people's front is in actual fact a phase in the demise of the other political parties... not much will come of the people's front policy." Rákosi also expounded the theory that the only use of the coalition parties was to serve as a hiding-place for the class enemy.

This standpoint constituted a turning-point in the MDP's—basically correct—alliance policy. It reflected the victory of sectarianism, which became predominant in the party leadership at the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949. At about the same time a similar break in policy occurred in the leading political parties of the other people's democracies as well.

The organizations of the Smallholders' Party and the Peasant Party gradually faded into oblivion. Their active members either joined the MDP or held public posts as people with no party affiliation. Most of their leaders—István Dobi, Péter Veres, Ferenc Erdei—continued to play an active role in Hungarian politics, but increasingly as prominent public figures rather than as representatives of a particular political party.

In May 1949 new elections were held in Hungary. The Independence Front entered the election with a joint list of candidates and no opposition party took up the challenge. Officially, the MFN list represented several parties, the MDP, the FKGP, the NPP and the two opposition parties which had joined the MFN—and the representatives of these parties featured on the list. In actual fact, however, it amounted to a one-party system.

The electorate's "yes" vote signified the endorsement of the People's Front list, the "no" vote, there being no opposition list, signified a theoretical rejection. Under the circumstances the People's Front list received 95 per cent of the votes cast.

After the election a new government was formed with István Dobi as president. Thirteen out of the eighteen ministers came from the MDP, three from the FKGP and two from the NPP. On 18 August 1949 the new National Assembly adopted the Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic.

The Constitution stipulates: The Hungarian People's Republic is a state of workers and working peasants in which "all power belongs to the working people". For the first time in Hungarian history, the Constitution codified the right to work, education and recreation.

The Constitution was welcomed by the workers of Hungary. The government declared 20 August Constitution Day.

The Success of the Three-Year Plan The Five-Year Plan

In 1947–9 the Hungarian people achieved tremendous results in the reconstruction of their country.

Anyone who surveyed the ruins of Budapest, Debrecen and Székesfehérvár in 1945, the looted factories, and the peasant farms denuded of their livestock, would have concluded that at least ten to twenty years were required before life could be said to have returned to normal. Yet, just four years after the end of the war, the output of Hungarian industry was 28 per cent higher than in 1938 and agriculture had caught up with the level of the pre-war years.

In 1947 the National Assembly endorsed the three-year plan for the reconstruction in Hungary. There were, however, many sceptics who questioned the feasibility of the plan. In point of fact the optimists were proved right—the plan was fulfilled within two years and five months.

The success of the three-year plan restored life to normal in Hungary; the factories were producing goods, the mines were operating and railway services were restored. Appreciable changes had taken place in people's day to day life. Ruined homes had once again become habitable. The population of Budapest, which had dropped sharply immediately after the war, was once again over a million. Famine had disappeared; food rations were first increased, and then eventually abolished altogether. Basic goods were available in the shops and people could buy them.

It has already been mentioned that when the *forint* was introduced in 1946 the state could promise wages worth 50 per cent of the pre-war real wage. In 1946–9 real wages more than doubled, reaching, and indeed slightly surpassing the pre-war level. Of course this is an overall figure. The enormous differences which had characterized the incomes of the Hungarian working class before the liberation were greatly reduced. As a result, the real income of certain strata of workers—unskilled and semi-skilled workers—surpassed the pre-war level while that of others—printers, precision instrument makers—remained considerably below that level. The wages of white-collar workers and professionals remained below the pre-war level. On the other hand the living standards of the agricultural proletariat—former farmhands who were now peasants cultivating their own land—was incomparably higher.

There were other important achievements as well, which filled people with enthusiasm despite the fact that they only constituted the beginning of processes which were to develop later. Unemployment was greatly reduced and disappeared entirely by the end of 1949. The children of workers and peasants began to go to secondary schools and universities. New scientific institutes and higher educational institutions were set up. A scheme was launched to organize free holiday for children. Four hundred villages were linked with the electricity network for the first time.

The socialist reorganization of the relations of production was continued during 1948–9. Wholesale trade and small factories were nationalized, as were enterprises

in foreign ownership. By the end of 1949 exploitation had been eradicated in Hungary—except in agriculture, where there were still wealthy peasant farmers.

These achievements filled people with enthusiasm. The negative phenomena, the first signs of which were already beginning to appear (e.g. the curtailment of democratic rights, the concentration of power, which it was increasingly impossible to supervise, in the hands of certain leaders) could still be regarded as the teething troubles of a newly emerging society. Every mistake could be accounted for by the heritage of the past, the ominous international situation and the need to eradicate the remnants of fascism in Hungary.

The great feats of reconstruction convinced people that the promises which had been made concerning the future were realistic ones. This hope was strengthened by the adoption of the first five-year plan in December 1949. The plan envisaged an eighty-six per cent growth in industrial output over a period of five years and set out as its main objective the transformation of Hungary, from an agro-industrial country, into an industrial agricultural country. In other words its aim was to reverse the ratio of agriculture and industry within the national income (with a simultaneous rise in agricultural production). The workers gave an enthusiastic welcome to the plan. To furnish cover for the plan, the state issued premium bonds, which were substantially over-subscribed.

The Emergence of the Personality Cult The Political Trials

The achievements of the post-liberation period greatly enhanced the reputation of the Hungarian Communist Party, and later of the Hungarian Working People's Party, led by Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971).

In 1918 Mátyás Rákosi was one of the founders of the Hungarian Party of Communists. A people's commissar under the Republic of Councils, he emigrated after its defeat. He returned to Hungary illegally in 1925. He was arrested and put on trial. His courageous behaviour in court earned Rákosi the admiration of the Hungarian and international communist movement. On his release from prison in 1940 after serving a fifteen-year sentence, Rákosi went to the Soviet Union, where he directed anti-fascist propaganda aimed at Hungary during the Second World War. In 1945 Rákosi returned to Hungary and became General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party. His revolutionary past, his extraordinary erudition in general and his thorough ideological training predestined him for this post, where at the start he worked satisfactorily.

From the very outset, however, Rákosi and his closest associates—Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas and József Révai—distrusted those communist leaders who had led the party in Hungary during the war. Underestimating their abilities, they tried to thrust them into the background.

The Rákosi group gradually abolished the practice of collective leadership within the party. The role of the elected leading bodies gradually became formal.

Increasingly, the power of decision-making on every important issue came to be in the hands of a single person, or was dominated by the Rákosi–Gerő–Farkas trio. At the same time the popularization of Rákosi's personality, and the distortion of his actual role assumed the proportions of a systematic campaign. The public was said that credit for the Communist Party's every achievement must go to a single person, Mátyás Rákosi.

Not only party membership, but also the vast majority of non-party people were convinced by this propaganda. Soon, Rákosi's figure was enveloped in an aura of mythical proportions—the myth of the “infallible leader”, whose every word was a revelation, someone to be trusted even when the motives for his deeds were not always comprehensible. Rákosi and his clique exploited this situation to their own advantage and gradually steered the party in a fatally incorrect direction, the path of sectarian dogmatism, and the violation of revolutionary legality.

In June 1949 it was with deep consternation that the public learned of the arrest of László Rajk, the then Foreign Minister and one of the party's most popular leaders, General György Pálffy, Tibor Szőnyi, head of the MDP's Cadre Department, and a number of others. At a trial staged in September 1949 they were charged with spying for Yugoslavia and treason. The accused were sentenced to death and executed.

After the Rajk trial a chilly atmosphere of distrust permeated the party and every section of life. Suspicion was directed primarily against those communists who had joined the party before the liberation. The completely unfounded charge was now levelled at these people that they had only been able to survive their underground existence during the war because they had turned traitor. It was on the basis of accusations of this kind that János Kádár, Gyula Kállai and others were imprisoned. Former social democrat leaders, among them Árpád Szakasits, György Marosán and István Riesz, were described as “imperialist agents” and sent to prison. The imprisonment of the left-wing social democrats wiped out most of the political advantages which had resulted from the merger of the two working class parties. The wave of arrests did not stop at the level of leadership. Middle and lower-ranking functionaries were also sent to prison in large numbers. Arresting people became the principal means of dealing with economic problems. Wherever there were disruptions in production, or in the supply of commodities the police immediately set about investigating the matter and did not stop until they found the “culprit”, who was “consciously sabotaging the implementation of the plan”. Hundreds of engineers and foremen were locked up in prison on the basis of these charges.

The execution of innocent people and imprisonment on a mass scale were indubitably the biggest crimes of this period, stemming from what is commonly referred to as the cult of personality. Other consequences of this phenomenon were, however, also extremely damaging. Decisions in economic policy made in the spirit of one-man “infallibility” affected the whole course of economic development. Democracy within the party was paralysed: the principle of one-person leadership was asserted at the lower level as well. Very soon the workers discovered that there

were discrepancies between words and deeds. This undermined confidence in the party. The political capital which the party had accumulated by 1948-9 was largely squandered during the first half of the five-year plan.

Achievements and Contradictions

The first five-year plan was launched in an atmosphere of enthusiasm among the working people—in the aftermath of the initial successes of the post-liberation era. Besides the Hungarian economy still possessed considerable reserves. For instance, there was room for increasing the work force.

In this connection it must be noted that several types of unemployment had been in existence before the liberation. In the first plan there was the worker who had still been working yesterday but had no job today. Official statistics only recognized this state as genuine unemployment. In reality, however, this was just the unemployment which was visible, alongside there was hidden unemployment as well. For instance, poor peasant families whose labour power was not entirely tied down by cultivating the land belonged in this category; so did the married women (the wives of workers, peasants and junior clerks), who would have gone out to work if there had been any opportunities for employment. The same held true for young peasants whose labour power was not needed on their own small family farms.

By the turn of 1949-50 visible unemployment (which had been a serious problem between 1945-8) disappeared. Not so hidden unemployment. The first five-year plan envisaged the eradication of this and the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Under the five-year plan new giant construction projects were launched which resulted in tremendous mobility. People who had previously never left their villages now decided to take up work in the building industry. The new construction projects attracted people from the various parts of the country and from various social strata like a magnet.

The first year of the plan went well. At the end of the year the statisticians were able to register all-time records: within a single year industrial output rose by twenty-seven per cent (and by thirty-seven per cent in the public sector), and agricultural output was five to ten per cent higher than in the previous year. From this the leaders of the MDP drew the conclusion that the targets laid down in the plan were too low, that they could be substantially raised and surpassed. The first year's results backed up this supposition. However, a decisive role was played by the deterioration of the international situation (the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950 demanded the rapid development of the country's defence industry).

Taking this consideration as its point of departure, the Second Congress of the MDP, which met in February 1951, raised plan targets substantially. Unrealistic targets were set, above all for heavy industry which provided the basis for the de-

fence industry. The forced development of heavy industry, coupled with the sudden, extraordinarily rapid development of the Hungarian Army, stripped the fifty to fifty-five per cent rise in the standard of living envisaged by the revised plan of its credibility.

Nonetheless, the first two years produced results that filled a majority of the population with optimism. Special mention must be made of the rapid growth in the number of new jobs. Initially, the rise in production stemmed almost exclusively from this. As a result a shortage of labour developed in almost every workplace. The workers (and above all the manual workers and technical intelligentsia) could take their pick of jobs. It is not difficult to envisage what this meant to people who had lived a precarious existence for decades.

At the beginning of the five-year plan other socialist achievements such as the extension of social security, free medical care, and sick-pay, also operated as a powerful mobilizing force. Whereas previously retirement pension had been the privilege of much-coveted categories of work, now people in general were able to look forward to a secure retirement pension even though it was a modest one.

The opportunities for women to work was another major social achievement. A significant proportion of women entered paid employment because their husbands did not earn enough to meet growing family demands at a satisfactory level. However, the woman who went out to work suddenly became an entirely different person from when she had been a housewife. There was a disproportionate growth in the burdens she bore; on the other hand her human awareness, independence and freedom also increased. Opportunities for further training opened up at work and tens of thousands of women took advantage of these opportunities.

All of these achievements were mirrored in the standard of living in a contradictory manner. When the new *forint* was introduced the government levelled out wages on a large scale. This was inevitable at the time; if fifty per cent of the 1938 wage level had been automatically guaranteed for every stratum, those working in the categories which were at the bottom of this scale before the war would not have earned even enough to feed themselves on. This meant a rise in the wages of workers in the lower income brackets and, conversely, a reduction in the wages of workers in higher income brackets at one and the same time. (E.g. it was necessary to raise the hourly wage of a casual labourer at a brick factory which in 1938 had been only half the hourly wage of weavers, to a few per cent above the wages for the latter. Generally speaking, the levelling out was accompanied by a drop in the wages of skilled workers. Compared with 1938, the real wages of semi-skilled and unskilled workers had risen by sixty-five per cent by 1953, whilst that of skilled workers was fifteen per cent below the 1938 level.

During this period the standard of living was subject to powerful fluctuations. At the end of 1948 Mátyás Rákosi said that "once again the self-sacrificing Spartan spirit must be aroused in the workers of the town and the village, the spirit which in the spring of 1945 produced wonders in the work of reconstruction and pulled the country back from the brink of the precipice". The chief ways of expressing this "Spartan spirit" were: the system of norms, and the compulsory subscription

to government premium bonds, which in general took about ten per cent of people's pay, together with price increases which from 1951 onwards were quite substantial. (The price increases of December 1951 were especially dramatic; the price of basic commodities went up by between fifty and one hundred per cent, while wages were raised by twenty per cent.) The standard of living dropped in 1951-2 and rose once again in 1953-4.

It was not however these fluctuations in the standard of living which posed the greatest problem. When honest explanations are given to them the working people will understand what is happening and are even willing to make sacrifices for the future. The trouble was that the party refused to admit the temporary decline in living standards. On the contrary, official propaganda constantly churned out slogans about the uninterrupted growth of affluence, which were in blatant contrast with people's everyday experiences.

Social Mobility

The first half of the fifties gave rise to tremendous changes in the structure of Hungarian society. The effect of these changes can still be felt. People started to change their occupation, place of residence and lifestyle on a vast scale. Above all this was manifest in the flow of superfluous agricultural labour into industry.

In 1950-5 the number of blue and white-collar workers rose by over a million.

The table below gives an idea of the extent of this growth (employees in thousands):

| Year | Industry | Construction industry | Agriculture (state sector) | Transport | Commerce | State administration |
|------|----------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------|
| 1949 | 574.4 | 79.4 | 79.5 | 177.0 | 113.9 | 190.7 |
| 1954 | 932.8 | 205.0 | 330.9 | 241.1 | 258.8 | 181.7 |

As the table indicates the biggest growth took place in industry and the construction industry: some 500,000 new workers entered production. In reality the number was far higher. For at this time hundreds of thousands of long-standing workers left the factories to take up various leading posts: during the mid-fifties they were employed in public administration, the armed forces and economic management bodies.

This meant that not only was there a vast increase in the number of the Hungarian working class but there was also a change in its composition. Not only were there more workers within the factories than prior to nationalization, but there were hardly any of the "old-timers" to be found alongside the work-benches.

The majority of the new workers in industry, about thirty-five per cent according

to the estimates, came from agriculture, twenty-five per cent from those who were not working formerly (mainly women), ten per cent from the former public administration apparatus, and the remainder from the upper strata who were now deprived of their incomes and a number of other categories. Of course a man does not become a worker just because he walks through the factory gates. Working class awareness and the discipline which goes with it cannot be acquired overnight, any more than can the skills required for industrial work. This phenomenon was reflected by the large-scale fluctuation in the labour force in the initial years of the five-year plan. One positive aspect of this situation was that people actually had a choice of jobs to move to and if they were unable to find a place which suited them they could switch jobs. From the viewpoint of the national economy, however, this was of course a negative phenomenon: in 1951-2 some sixty to seventy per cent of the workforce changed jobs.

The lack of adequate skills presented an even greater problem. The new workers attended crash courses to obtain the qualifications of a skilled worker. This was a mere formality: it took years to become a real skilled worker and during this period large quantities of substandard goods were produced. In the end, however, most of these people did in fact become really skilled workers.

Those who came to work in the factories from rural areas brought their peasant customs and attitudes with them, and the supporters of the former regime brought their hatred of the socialist system. Two things were required to make this heterogeneous mass into a working class committed to socialism: (1) the presence and educating work of those class-conscious workers who formed the core of the working class; (2) a correct and carefully thought-out working class policy formulated by the MDP. Unfortunately neither of these preconditions prevailed to the full.

Between 1945-56 some 300,000 people from the shop-floor were picked out to fill leading positions. In 1954, for instance, 50,000 party members of working class background were registered on the files of the Budapest party organizations who, at that particular time, were working in the state apparatus. Most of these people had made incredible efforts to bridge the gap between their original training and education and the skills and knowledge required of them in their new jobs.

The number of self-employed artisans and retailers dropped sharply during the first five-year plan. The former decreased from 180,000 to 46,000, the latter from 40,000 to 4,000. Self-employed artisans in general found it easier to obtain employment, partly in industry and partly in the artisans' co-operatives. The problem was, rather, that the discontinuation of their activities caused disruption in the services sector.

Social mobility was at its most spectacular as far as the composition of the intelligentsia was concerned. To give just a few facts and figures: in the 1937-8 academic year 314 students of poor peasant origin attended secondary schools and 93 studied at universities and colleges in Hungary. In the 1952-3 academic year the comparable number was 30,600 for the secondary schools and 8,225 for the universities. Overall in the 1955-6 academic year over fifty per cent of university and college students came from working class and peasant backgrounds.

This, however, did not mean that the children of the former intelligentsia were forced out of secondary or higher education. For the number of students in secondary and higher education more than trebled (in 1937-8 the number of students at institutions of higher education was 11,747 while in 1955-6 it was 45,431).

The levelling out of wages hit the intelligentsia hard. While under the Horthy regime the salaries of professional workers were substantially higher than the earnings of skilled workers even for the lowest income brackets, now this was no longer the case. On the contrary, the income of major professional groups (e.g. teachers) fell below that of workers. As a result of the vulgar interpretation of Marxism at the time members of the intelligentsia were treated as "second-class citizens". Consequently, many became apathetic and observed what was happening as indifferent onlookers.

The changes in the status of the professional (and white-collar) workers were accompanied by a decline in their social prestige. Whereas formerly the possession of a secondary school certificate automatically meant entry into the enviable world of the "gentry", now the attraction of that world was tarnished. The good skilled worker regarded himself as ranking higher socially than an intellectual.

The former capitalists, some 200,000 in all, followed various paths during these years. Some had left the country before 1948 and established a livelihood for themselves in the West. Others took on some form of work for appearances sake and lived off the salvaged remnants of their wealth, awaiting the imminent restoration of the former regime. In 1951 many of them were deported from Budapest and resettled in distant villages where they tried to make a living in agriculture. Still others went to work in the factories. And there were people like, for instance, Lipót Aschner, the director of the Tungsram Works, who placed their expertise at the service of socialism and earned recognition for themselves under the new conditions.

Everyday Life in the Fifties

The life of a society is never confined exclusively to the sphere of politics. Besides politics, and closely linked with it, people's lives are determined, for instance, by technical and scientific progress, which speeded up tremendously in the second half of the twentieth century, and also changed the face of Hungarian society.

First and foremost the fact that urbanization speeded up must be mentioned. This phenomenon was not linked exclusively with socialism, although there can be no doubt that socialist industrialization speeded up this process substantially. (As early as the thirties and forties there was a perceptible comparative decline in the rural population and an acceleration in the growth of the urban population.) The population of Budapest, provincial industrial centres and county seats grew rapidly. Urbanization had both positive and negative effects. On the plus side was the fact that large numbers of people now lived under more civilized conditions. On the minus side mention must first of all be made of the rapid deterioration in the hous-

ing situation. Even before the war the housing situation in the Hungarian towns had been dreadfully bad by European standards. The devastation caused by the war aggravated the situation still further: although damaged buildings were more or less restored, no new homes were built at all for at least five or six years. As a result the towns were unable to provide civilized housing conditions for the people who moved into them. It was at about this time that a previously unknown form of providing accommodation, the co-tenancy, came into existence on a wide scale. This meant that a flat consisting of several rooms and formerly occupied by a single family was now shared by two or three families. Each family occupied one or two living rooms and they shared the kitchen, bathroom and lavatory. This became a source of constant friction between strangers forced to live under the same roof.

Rents for accommodation lost their former regulating role. Rents were fixed at such a low level that even poorly paid workers could afford even the most expensive flat if they could procure one. The system of state distribution replaced rent as the regulator. Flats were distributed by state officials in accordance with various criteria (number of children, importance of the work done by the head of the household, etc.). Consequently, the old traditional working class districts of Budapest disappeared. Now almost every social stratum and group was represented in every district of the city.

Heavily subsidized by the state, public transport was exceptionally cheap and everybody could afford it. It now appeared almost unbelievable that just fifteen years before people walked for two to three hours every day to and from work. The trams and buses were, however, always overcrowded. This period saw the appearance of the trolleybus service and the start of building the Budapest underground.

Generally speaking, nutrition was restored to the pre-war level. Although there were serious difficulties from time to time, on the whole there was a slight improvement. Factory canteens were set up in almost every workplace and here the majority of people could eat an inexpensive hot meal at least once a day. A catering network for day nursery and school children was also established.

There was very little variety in clothing. Compared with pre-war levels, the differences in financial status were greatly reduced and this was also mirrored in what people wore. Fashion too was affected by the "Spartan spirit": even those who could afford fancier clothes tended to dress simply.

Almost every family now owned a radio set, at one time regarded as a luxury. In 1953 legislation was passed on setting up a Hungarian Television Company and experimental broadcasting began shortly after. Nonetheless, television was something known only to the technical experts at this time. There were hardly any privately owned cars in the country. On the other hand motor-cycling was becoming increasingly popular—especially among young workers who were earning well.

People's cultural needs grew in the towns. Whereas a visit to the theatre had previously been a rare and festive occasion, it now became a form of entertainment enjoyed by the public at large. (Admittedly, some of the plays staged at the theatres

were of poor quality and stereotyped. But performances of the classics provided a genuine cultural experience for many people.) A public library network was also established: the number of people who became regular readers of literature rose rapidly.

Although stereotyped novels—written primarily for the purpose of political propaganda—dominated book publishing, literary works of real value were also published in large numbers. The works of Shakespeare, Balzac, Zola, Hugo, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Turgenev, Heine, Thomas Mann, Faulkner, Steinbeck and Hemingway were published and sold in such a large number of copies as would have been unimaginable earlier. Although the bill of fare at cinemas consisted primarily of Soviet war films, it was during these years that cinema audiences in Hungary were first able to see the early works of Italian Neo-Realism.

The fifties also witnessed the finest achievements in Hungary's sporting history. The People's Stadium which seated eighty thousand people was built in Budapest and opened in 1953. The grandstands were often packed to capacity: this was the golden age of Hungarian soccer. There were significant achievements in other areas of sport as well. The Hungarian team came away with sixteen gold medals from the Helsinki Olympics in 1952 and came third on the unofficial ranking list of nations. Mass sport was enjoying a boom, with thousands of people taking part in the various physical fitness training movements.

There was a remarkable improvement in health care. The appearance of new medicines, above all antibiotics, played an important role in this. The lives of many people who would previously have been condemned to death by disease were now saved. But as the introduction of free health care for most of Hungary's population was not accompanied by a corresponding growth in the number of medical staff and expansion of medical facilities (outpatient clinics, hospitals), hospitals became increasingly overcrowded. The growth in the population was favourable. But this too was a process beset by controversy. The upward trend in the number of births was due primarily to the clampdown on abortion. Although efforts were made to improve the situation of working mothers, the day nursery and nursery school network was unable to cope with the large increase in the number of children.

A network of company holiday homes was established during this period. (Generally speaking, these were provided by the nationalized summer homes which had belonged to the wealthy people of the former regime, although a number of new holiday homes were also built.) It was during the fifties that summer holidays at Lake Balaton, the Danube Bend or in the mountain regions first became available for wide masses of people.

Foreign travel was almost non-existent during this period. Private individuals were not able to travel either to the West, or to the socialist countries. People could only travel abroad on official business. A particularly painful aspect of this ban on travel was that families in Hungary lost touch with relatives living in the neighbouring countries. Parents and children, who lived on opposite sides of the frontier, lost sight of each other for years. This affected millions in Hungary.

The most important change in the villages was the advent of electricity. This not

only meant that the evenings could be spent by an electric light instead of a petroleum lamp but also that the cinema and the radio appeared in the villages. In 1949 there were 686 village cinemas; in 1952 2,084.

The achievements of the technical and scientific revolution however appeared more slowly in the villages than in the towns. Although the first tractors and combines appeared in the fields, there was very little real change in the traditional peasant work. Ploughing, sowing and harvesting, physically the most taxing agricultural tasks, were still largely done by hand. Dirt roads still accounted for most of the village road network and the horse-drawn cart was the principal means of transport.

The Agricultural Policy of the Hungarian Working People's Party

As early as 1948 the MDP leadership openly advocated the collectivization of agriculture, regarding this as the socialist path for the development of Hungarian agriculture. There was, however, no mention at this point of how long this process should take and what means should be used to accomplish it.

Modern agricultural machinery reached the villages through a network of special machine stations. There were 220 state-owned machine stations in Hungary at the end of 1949, offering some 6,000 tractors to poor peasants who did not have a horse. The first producers' co-operative groups appeared at the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949. Initially it was primarily the poor peasants who joined the co-operatives. The advantages of collective farming could not predominate in these early co-operatives which had very limited resources. The cohesive force in them was not so much the economic advantage, but, rather the members' faith in the future.

When the targets of the first five-year plan were raised the MDP leadership arrived at the conclusion that the socialist transformation of agriculture must be speeded up. The need for this was also underlined by economic necessity. Only the preconditions for such a transformation were lacking. The state was unable to offer adequate economic assistance to the new co-operatives and the vast majority of peasants did not want to join as there were no guarantees that such a move would benefit them.

The plan targets envisaged a substantial rise in agricultural production. This, however, failed to materialize. Poor yields led to food shortages. The country's political leadership tried to offset this by raising the quota of produce the peasants were forced to sell to the state each year at low prices (compulsory delivery). It often happened that the peasant did not even produce as much grain on his farm as he was supposed to sell to the state. These peasant families not only lost all their produce and had to go without themselves, but they were also punished. As a result, there was no incentive for the peasant to farm his land: many left their land uncultivated, left the village and sought a livelihood in industry.

The Rákosi clique wanted to implement the collectivization of agriculture within the span of a few years. This would have been an unrealistic target even

if it had been accompanied by a patient campaign of enlightenment. This was not the case, however. The Rákosi clique tried to speed up the transformation of Hungarian agriculture by the use of economic pressure, by making private farming impossible, by constantly harassing the peasants and by levying unrealistically high taxes. This was bound to produce just semblance of results. Although co-operative membership rose substantially—to 370,000 by 1952—farmers who felt that they had been forced to join did not regard the co-operatives as their own. Consequently, the yields achieved by co-operatives were not above the national average and so could not alleviate the food shortages.

The Hungarian villages were living through dramatic years. On the one hand there were the memories of yesterday's life as a farmhand, the rise from this status and the joy of the distribution of the land; the speedy recovery after 1945; the help given by the workers; the educational opportunities for peasant children. On the other hand there were the Draconian compulsory deliveries to the state, and the bitterness caused by constant harassment.

Because of the mistake committed in the policies concerning the peasants, working people in the villages grew increasingly discontented and the worker-peasant alliance was weakened.

The June 1953 Resolution of MDP

By early 1953 the political situation in Hungary became serious. It was now obvious that the increased targets for the five-year plan were unrealistic. There were disruptions in almost each area of life. Because of a coal shortage, in the winter of 1952–3 there was no heating in a number of homes and offices. There were serious shortages in basic foodstuffs. The standard of living declined sharply.

Meanwhile the newspapers were dominated by rosy accounts of "heroic feats". Rákosi and his clique refused to acknowledge the failures. However, the problems were by now becoming so grave that discussion of them could no longer be evaded.

Stalin died in March 1953. After his death the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) began to liquidate the consequences of the personality cult. The leadership of the CPSU advised the leadership of the MDP to subject the party's policy to self-critical analysis. Under the pressure of the domestic political situation and in response to the advice of the CPSU Central Committee, in June 1953, the Central Leadership of the MDP decided to take up the issue of reviewing the party's entire policy.

The Central Leadership meeting of June 1953 constituted a turning-point in the policy of the MDP. The resolution adopted by the meeting stated that the party leadership—above all Rákosi himself—had committed serious mistakes. It denounced the forced pace of industrialization which had caused a decline in the standard of living and had seriously damaged agriculture. It condemned the illegal practices and excesses linked with the development of the co-operatives. It pointed to the lack of collective leadership as the principal source of the mistakes.

The resolution stated that the government must have greater independence. It called on Rákosi, who had been acting as Hungary's prime minister as well as party leader since 1952, to resign this post. It recommended Imre Nagy as premier.

Imre Nagy was born in 1896. He joined the communist movement as a prisoner of war during the First World War. In the twenties he took part in the work of the illegal Hungarian Party of Communists and later emigrated to the Soviet Union. Here he became involved in scholarship, specializing primarily in agro-economic issues. During the Second World War he worked as editor for Radio Kossuth, which broadcast from Moscow. Nagy returned to Hungary at the beginning of 1945 and, as a member of the Central Leadership, filled various leading posts. In 1948–9 he came into conflict with the party leadership; he felt that the small peasant farms still had a future in Hungary and that socialist agriculture could be based on them. For this he was criticized and relegated to the background. However, from 1951 onwards he once again worked in executive positions. In 1952 he became Deputy Prime Minister.

The rise of Imre Nagy to prominence in the MDP leadership indicated that this leadership was now turning toward agriculture. This in itself was commendable, as were the measures which were introduced in this field. A resolution was adopted on raising the number of capital projects in agriculture and on giving assistance to private farming. Peasants were given the opportunity to leave the co-operatives, indeed to dissolve them in certain cases.

The resolution of June 1953 was a great step forward in the correction of mistakes. However, the efforts to put things right were not consistent enough. They did not bring about the all-important changes in the leadership—above all they failed to remove Mátyás Rákosi from the head of the party. Neither did they press for the rehabilitation of innocent communists who had been convicted.

The June resolution was not made public; its content reached the people indirectly, through newspaper articles and speeches. Nonetheless it evoked tremendous response. The measures which accompanied the resolution had a particularly favourable effect. The government reduced the plan of directives, cut the price of consumer goods and raised wages. The compulsory deliveries imposed on the peasants were reduced and the fines levied on them for failing to comply with this obligation were remitted. A partial amnesty was announced, internment camps were dismantled and the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office was set up to protect the legal order. Gradually a review began of the trials of innocent people who had taken part in the working class movement and who had been imprisoned.

Half-Hearted Measures

The June resolution had to be translated into specific measures. Important questions were waiting to be settled. For instance, a decision had to be made regarding the increased economic targets of 1951—which had obviously been unrealistic—and new targets had to be set for industry. A decision had to be made on what was to

happen to the major construction projects. It was only through a massive cut in capital projects that a speedy and perceptible improvement in living standards could be achieved. This also raised a dilemma: would it be right to call to a halt to investment projects which were near completion; especially if they were highly important for the national economy.

There were sharp disputes over these issues within the leadership of the MDP. Rank and file members soon discovered that there was confusion at the top. Diametrically opposed measures were introduced. Although in their speeches party leaders still spoke of unity, behind the words there emerged the outlines of important differences between Rákosi on the one hand and Imre Nagy on the other.

Rákosi and his clique regarded the situation which had emerged as a temporary retreat. They hoped that Imre Nagy and his supporters would soon be removed from the leadership and they would then be able to continue where they had left off in June 1953. They were particularly afraid that their responsibility for the execution or imprisonment of innocent communists would come to light.

Imre Nagy and his associates on the other hand, feeling confident and firmly established in power, were determined to remove the Rákosi clique from the political arena. To this end they were willing to join forces with people who had already been seriously compromised in the former mistakes. (E.g. when Mihály Farkas, the principal executor responsible for the violations of the law, offered his services, Imre Nagy was only too glad to accept them.) Blinded by their bid for power, they introduced unfounded economic measures which only increased confusion still further.

Naturally, rank and file members could not see what was going on behind the scenes. All they were aware of was that the party's policy, formerly united and unequivocal, was now becoming increasingly incomprehensible. The meetings of the Central Leadership, which followed each other in close succession, and the resolution of the party's Third Congress, which was convened in 1954, were full of obscure allusions. They either spoke of the left-wing threat, or talked about the right-wing threat, without clearly stating what or who were involved. These allusions were interpreted differently by the party organizations, usually to suit the whim of local leaders.

Disagreement over the interpretation of the June resolution first surfaced in relation to the questions concerning agricultural policy. Imre Nagy wanted to implement that part of the resolution which promised greater assistance to private farming and neglected the consolidation of the co-operatives. He watched passively as the peasants deserted the co-operatives and carried away their jointly acquired assets. In autumn 1953 over 500 producers' co-operatives were dissolved with some 120,000 members leaving their collectives.

Indecision over issues of industrial policy resulted in serious consequences. The first five-year plan was completed by the end of 1954. Although its achievements were impressive, the original plan targets were not met. The country was full of unfinished construction projects waiting for a decision to be made about what was to become of these. This resulted in serious financial losses. Because of differences

over economic policy, the drafting of the second five-year plan was delayed. In 1955 the economic year began with no decision having been made concerning plan targets: most companies did not know how much they would have to produce the following year.

There was confusion over reorganizing the Independence Front as well. After the 1949 election Rákosi and his clique stripped this body of its political function. Imre Nagy revived the Front and strove to make it serve his own political ambitions. His aim was to make it a political rival which would compete with the MDP.

The unprincipled power struggle compromised the entire MDP leadership. Rank and file members lost their sense of direction and their confidence in their leaders was shaken. The party was heading towards total paralysis.

The power struggle was accompanied by frequent changes in the political leadership. Every change in the composition of the government signified a new phase in the political struggle. All of this also affected the economy. Confusion at the top caused serious damage in both industry and agriculture.

The International Situation in the Fifties

The Cold War dominated international politics in the fifties. The United States and her allies established further military blocs and in 1955 admitted the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO. This state of affairs forced the socialist countries to set up the Warsaw Treaty in May 1955, aimed at serving the joint protection of the participating countries.

The efforts of the socialist countries to boost their defence capabilities were highly successful. In 1953 the Soviet hydrogen bomb was tested successfully. This achievement, which was coupled with big advances in improving the other military services, signified an end to the military superiority of the West. A balance of military power between the two world systems was established.

The governments of the capitalist nations did everything they could to paralyse and disrupt the building of socialism. They established a network of radio transmission directed against the socialist countries. Radio Free Europe did more than just carry out propaganda against these countries, they also directed intelligence activities and subversion. Special training courses were launched in Europe—mainly in the Federal Republic of Germany—in which people who had defected from Eastern Europe were schooled for a return to their countries of origin to carry out intelligence activities and sabotage.

During the fifties, Hungarian state security bodies liquidated several groups of this type. However, they were constantly replaced by new ones. These subversive groups made preparations to trigger off an armed insurrection in Hungary and the other socialist countries at the appropriate time.

The illegal organizations reckoned that the population had been turned against the party and state leadership in significant numbers by the mistakes made in the process of building socialism, as in fact had happened in the German Democratic

Republic, giving rise to the June 1953 events. They hoped to achieve similar success in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Diplomacy turned out to be the most effective way of normalizing relations between the two world systems: in 1953 the conclusion of an armistice agreement ended the Korean War; in 1954 an agreement was signed between the Vietnamese liberation and French colonial forces to terminate the war in South-East Asia. In 1955 the four great powers agreed on the restoration of Austrian independence. The Republic of Austria was declared a neutral country and the four occupying powers (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France) withdrew their troops from Austrian territory.

Following Stalin's death in 1953 the Soviet political leadership made efforts to normalize relations with Yugoslavia. In the summer of 1953 a Soviet party and government delegation headed by Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev paid a visit to Yugoslavia. After this the other socialist countries also endeavoured to put their relations with Yugoslavia on a new footing. This was by no means an easy task as had accumulated a multitude of grievances during the Cold War years.

The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was convened in February 1956. The congress subjected the changes which had taken place in the world to close scrutiny. From the analysis of these changes the congress came to the conclusion that the balance of power was such that the joint efforts of the advocates of peace and socialism were capable of averting the threat of a new war. The conditions were now ready for a peaceful road to socialism—at least for some countries.

The congress sharply criticized the mistakes directly linked with Stalin's activities. The violations of the law committed by him were denounced and the tasks which would serve to eliminate the consequence of the cult of the personality completely were defined.

The July 1956 Resolution of the Central Leadership

The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU triggered off great political ferment in Hungary. The Rákosi clique refused to draw the conclusions arising from the eradication of the cult of the personality. This enabled Imre Nagy and his group to present themselves as the real adherents of the Twentieth Congress. Imre Nagy and his clique established ever closer contacts with the right-wing social democrats who had been expelled in 1948 and with the reactionary politicians who had formerly belonged to the Smallholders' and the National Peasant Parties. Imre Nagy was pushed into the limelight and so he appeared to be the leading spirit of these groups.

Rank and file party members found it increasingly difficult to grasp what was going on. The Rákosi leadership looked on passively as the right-wing clique spread their influence to new groups. There was however growing demand, especially amongst the older party members, for the restoration of some semblance of law and the removal of Rákosi from the leadership of the party. Those members

of the Central Leadership who sincerely wanted to end the confusion now emerged more united and more resolute in their demands for the measures needed to normalize the situation. They pressed for a struggle on two fronts which would put an end to all forms of deviation from the political line of Marxism-Leninism.

The July 1956 resolution of the Central Leadership was a big step towards this. The resolution stated that the party leadership had repeated some of the mistakes which had been disclosed in 1953 and reiterated that they also had failed to draw the necessary conclusions from the Twentieth Congress. The resolution specified a number of things to be done which were suited to resolving the contradictions which had accumulated. Members of the Central Leadership were clearly aware that passing sound resolutions was not enough: the implementation of such resolutions depended to a large extent on whether or not the right people could be found to do the job. This meant those in the party leadership who were directly responsible for the procrastination of the previous years would have to be removed.

The struggle which erupted over this issue reflected the balance of power in the leadership. The Central Leadership relieved Mátyás Rákosi of his duties as First Secretary and from his membership of the Political Committee. Mihály Farkas, who was gravely implicated in the violations of legality, was expelled from the party. Another important development was that at this session János Kádár, Gyula Kállai, György Marosán and Imre Mező, who were among the innocent people imprisoned prior to 1953, once again became members of the Central Leadership. The changes at the top were, however, neither consistent, nor radical. The Central Leadership made it possible for Rákosi to ask for retirement on grounds of ill health and was thus able to avoid political denunciation. Ernő Gerő was elected First Secretary of the Central Leadership, a person who bore great responsibility for both the pre-1953 mistakes and the wrangling of the post-1953 period.

Despite the inconsistencies mentioned above, the July resolution provided a good foundation for at last restoring order in the country. The public was informed of the resolution. For the first time in years the party candidly revealed its problems to the people, listened to their opinion and asked for their co-operation in carrying out the work to be done. Great public interest and expectation was aroused.

Following the resolution a new economic policy was formulated. New decisions were adopted over questions of agricultural policy. A resolution was passed on the party's policy towards the intelligentsia, the purpose of which was to increase their prestige.

There was, however, a price to be paid for the inconsistencies of the July session. The sectarian forces which had not been removed from the leading bodies continued to hinder the correction of mistakes. The Central Leadership was unable to restore the party's unity of action and political unity. The promising enthusiasm which could be experienced after the July meeting of the Central Leadership soon evaporated. The right recovered from their initial shock and went into action in order to torpedo the July resolution.

Soon the signs that control was slipping from the hands of the party and state leadership began to appear. The country was drifting towards ominous events.

The Struggle against the Counter-Revolution Consolidation, Laying the Foundations of Socialism (1956-62)

The Counter-Revolutionary Uprising

At the end of July 1956, after the meeting of the Central Leadership (18-21 July 1956), events seemed to indicate that the MDP had drawn the right conclusions and in time, from the open offensive which had been launched by the revisionists in the so-called press debate of the Petöfi Circle at the end of June 1956. (The Petöfi Circle operated alongside the party's youth organization, the Central Leadership of the Federation of Working Youth, and served as a forum of debate for young intellectuals.) It appeared they had learnt from the Poznan disturbances of June 1956 which at one and the same time had indicated pressing internal contradictions in the building of socialism, and had revealed the dangerous activities of the imperialist circles and of the counter-revolutionary forces in Poland. It was hoped that, as in June 1953, Hungary would learn from the experiences of other socialist countries in order to avoid the development of a critical situation. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union created, in theory, better, less equivocal conditions for this in comparison with 1953.

At the 27 June 1957 meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP), First Secretary János Kádár presented the following assessment of the resolution and the response to it:

"This Central Leadership resolution could have constituted a turning-point in the life of the party and the entire country. This was a good resolution... it created every political precondition for the rectification and elimination, through the normal channels, of the shortcomings and mistakes which had appeared in the life of the party, the country and the population at large." Referring to the mass rallies which had followed the session he put forward his own views: "I remember that 18,000 people, communists and non-communists, gathered in the main square of Salgótarján. Every mistake which had been committed in the party's political practice was discussed there, as was the fact that the July resolution of the Central Leadership had created the conditions to correct these mistakes through normal channels. I submit, comrades, that the public welcomed the July resolution with unbounded jubilation." Rallies at which the mood was similar were staged throughout the country.

But when it came to implementing the resolution, there was much delay and indecision. Although the July decisions were correct, they did not demonstrate a tangible turning-point to the most important classes and strata of working people.

The question of the consolidation of farmland (the regrouping of small hold-

ings—usually to the detriment of the private farmer—so that the land in co-operative ownership was amalgamated) was very important, but what would have been even more important was the abolition of compulsory deliveries, the peasants' biggest grievance. This, however, was not done. The MDP Central Leadership resolution on the intelligentsia considerably improved the social prestige of professional workers, although it did not bring about changes in the situation of large, low-income groups, such as the teachers. The trade unions repeatedly warned of discontent amongst the workers because of wages and working conditions (there were strikes in the summer of 1956), the building of new housing lagged behind the pace of industrialization and this greatly aggravated the housing situation in the cities: yet not even the outlines of a solution were drawn up. The failure of the MDP to make the all-important decisions eventually undermined the credibility of the "small" steps as well. Moreover, by stressing the policy of a "clean sweep" and a "new start", Ernő Gerő confused the picture. Inherent in the slogan of a "new start" was the possibility of a repetition of the 1954 events, when the sectarian-dogmatic and revisionist groups within the party leadership had concluded an unprincipled compromise. A letter from the Central Leadership, dated 10 September 1956, also came to the conclusion that "solving the problems has slowed down since the July resolution." And time was running out. It was particularly unfortunate from this point of view that many of the most highly respected leaders of the MDP were abroad in September 1956 (e. g. normalizing Hungary's relations with Yugoslavia). Their absence meant that even more precious time was lost in settling the major issues and the chances of effective action on the part of the party leadership was further reduced.

After the July resolution the revisionist opposition rallied around Imre Nagy was plunged into a state of confusion.

But after a brief lull, in September 1956, the revisionist group launched a new offensive. The Petőfi Circle resumed its activities and writers belonging to the Imre Nagy group took over the leadership of the General Assembly of the Writers' Federation. A similar process took place in the press. Contemporary literary weeklies, *Irodalmi Újság* (Literary Journal), and *Művelt Nép* (Educated People) became the mouthpieces of the Imre Nagy group, whose grip over the media in general was becoming more powerful every day. At the beginning of the academic year they gained a foothold in almost every institution of higher education; they also organized "Petőfi Circle Branches", and clubs of intellectuals in the provinces. The revisionists used these forums to wage a campaign against "Stalinism", against "retarding forces," advocating an "independent Hungarian road" to socialism. During these weeks the subversive activities of the imperialist powers were intensified and almost every group of emigrant Hungarians joined in. Spectacular acts such as the hijacking of a provincial MALÉV (Hungarian Airlines) flight and an attempt to repeat this (which was frustrated) indicated that an armed opposition existed within the country as well. It was in this atmosphere that the ceremonial reburial of László Rajk and his associates, innocent victims who had been condemned and executed, took place on 6 October 1956. The revision-

ists launched a press campaign to try and exploit this occasion for their own ends. Although huge crowds attended the burial to pay their last respects to Rajk and his fellows, there was no actual provocation at the funeral itself. After the crowds dispersed, however, a few hundred university students staged a demonstration in the city and a section of the demonstrators chanted openly anti-regime slogans. Manifestations of right-wing sentiment at the universities shocked even some of the leaders of the opposition groups. A few tentative attempts were made to restrain this tendency (primarily at the Arts Faculty of Budapest University); these, however, were thwarted by the organization of a federation of university students, independent of the party—the Federation of University and College Associations (MEFESz). Launched in Szeged University in southern Hungary (on 16 October 1956), this organization quickly and successfully attracted the support of Hungary's universities and colleges. On 22 October 1956 a students' rally at the Budapest Technical University passed a resolution calling for a demonstration on the following day, the purpose of which was to lend emphasis to a 16-point charter of demands which they were putting forward. The rest of Budapest's universities supported the resolution, as did the student rallies staged in the various colleges (although the sixteen points were not unanimously endorsed). The Petöfi Circle supported the idea of staging a demonstration. They demanded the inclusion of the Imre Nagy group in the party leadership, a public trial for Mihály Farkas, who had been arrested for grave violations of legality, the expulsion of Mátyás Rákosi from the party, and the re-examination of party resolutions detrimental to the interests of the revisionist group. Solidarity with the Polish people served as the pretext for the demonstration. The Polish United Workers' Party held its Eighth Plenary Session between 19–21 October 1956, at which resolutions of historic importance were adopted on the reappraisal of former, erroneous political practices. The Polish people backed the resolutions of the plenary session and renewal was spearheaded by the party. Poland's mood was authentically depicted, decades later, by moving shots in Wajda's *Man of Marble*. In the absence of official information, at the time the revisionists in Hungary were able to give their own interpretation of the events in Poland. A leading article in *Szabad Nép* on 23 October 1956, which welcomed the student rallies, confused the issue. In contrast to this it came as a surprise that on 23 the Minister for Home Affairs banned the planned demonstration, but later, under pressure from the revisionist group revoked the ban.

The demonstration began at three o'clock in the afternoon. It soon became clear that the revisionist group would not be able to keep things under control. Organized groups chanted nationalist and anti-Soviet slogans in order to sway the masses and even prevented Imre Nagy from addressing the crowd in front of Parliament. This was perhaps the last opportunity for the revisionist group to take stock of their views and conduct. They still had the chance to mobilize their forces for the defence of the socialist order, to abandon their factionalism and rally round the forces organizing the struggle against the oncoming offensive.

In the evening hours of 23 October 1956 organized armed groups launched an

attack against public buildings (the Radio, the headquarters of *Szabad Nép*, etc.), factories (e. g. the Arms and Engineering Works), police stations and barracks, and occupied several strategic points in the capital city.

Indecision in the leadership of the armed forces, and confusion, together with premeditated treason and sabotage on the part of a number of leaders, frustrated attempts at a resolute counter-offensive. As a result the surprise attack was accompanied by a measure of success: the Radio, the headquarters of *Szabad Nép* were occupied and the armed groups established a foothold in parts of districts 2, 7, 8 and 9 of Budapest.

The first "official" response to the events of 23 October was a radio address by First Secretary Ernő Gerő, who had just returned from Yugoslavia. The statement, which was made at eight o'clock in the evening, gave a correct assessment of the nature of these events. However, by branding everyone who had taken to the streets counter-revolutionaries, he did more harm than good. The address failed to come forward with a programme of development and did not mobilize communists and the forces ready to fight for socialism.

During these dramatic hours this group, which still held important positions within the party, tried to prevent the Central Leadership from being convened. They were fully aware that at such a meeting it was inevitable that they would be asked to account for their political responsibility for the latest developments, and that this would also be accompanied by major changes in the leadership. However, their attempts were unsuccessful.

The MDP Central Leadership met during the night of 23-24 October; they adopted a programme to defeat the uprising and took steps which would make it possible for misguided people to dissociate themselves from the counter-revolution. A resolution was passed on arming the workers, which however was not implemented. The meeting decided to set up a Military Committee the task of which would be to mobilize the armed forces with a view to protecting law and order. A resolution was also adopted requesting assistance from Soviet forces stationed in Hungary. Imre Nagy and his group took part in making all these decisions since at the meeting they too were elected onto the reshuffled executive bodies, with the recommendation that Imre Nagy be appointed Prime Minister. Although Ernő Gerő was confirmed in his post as First Secretary at this meeting, he was relieved of his duties on 25 when the Central Leadership elected János Kádár to this post. It now looked as though the unity of the party had been restored in this extremely difficult situation. Imre Nagy described the uprising of 23 October as a counter-revolution, ordered martial law and launched a ruthless struggle against those who wanted to overthrow the socialist order.

Within days, the mobilized army units, the domestic law enforcement detachments, the police and Soviet troops drove the rebels back to their bases. It looked as though the liquidation of these isolated groups could be accomplished speedily. Firm military action prevented the uprising from spreading to the entire country.

In the given international situation the defeat of the counter-revolution in Hungary became an issue of crucial importance from the viewpoint of peace and

progress. Great Britain, France and Israel launched a war in the Middle East to retrieve the positions they had lost after the nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956, and to overthrow the Nasser regime in Egypt. In doing so they counted on the Soviet Union being "tied down" by the Hungarian situation. The offensive planned for 16 October was in fact carried out on 29—the timing have been deliberate—and after fierce fighting when they occupied large areas, they invaded the canal zone.

During the critical days of late October, when the threat of domestic events was closely linked with the danger of a new world war, the treachery of Imre Nagy and his group had particularly tragic consequences. They were already sabotaging the execution of military plans, and they now used their positions in the leadership of the armed forces, and above all in the Budapest Police Headquarters to attack those fighting to defeat the socialist order from the rear and to "appease" the counter-revolution. On 27 October they forced the Central Leadership to reappraise their former political line radically and compelled them to adopt organizational decision which placed the control of the party in the hands of a Presidium which was under their influence.

Now in full control, Imre Nagy announced in a statement on 28 October that he regarded the events since 23 October not as a counter-revolution, but as a democratic national uprising. Further, he added that the government's armed forces were initiating a cease-fire so that the so-called revolutionary bodies could be incorporated into the state order; he announced that the State Security Authority (ÁVH), the organization responsible for domestic security, would be dissolved and that Soviet troops would leave Budapest.

The statement made by Imre Nagy marked the beginning of the second phase of the counter-revolution. This, and the leading article in the 28 October edition of *Szabad Nép* disrupted the struggle against the uprising and paved the way for an enemy offensive on a nation-wide scale. "At the top" further efforts were made to crush the socialist order. On 30 October the MDP was dissolved. Imre Nagy and his group started to create a new party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP); the former coalition parties were reorganized (with leadership which were predominantly right-wing. On 31 October 1956 Imre Nagy proclaimed Hungary's neutrality and announced her withdrawal from the Warsaw Treaty. Further, he demanded that Soviet troops leave the country. On 2 November 1956 he announced the reorganization of the government on a coalition basis.

In addition to the political parties of the former government coalition of 1945, right-wing, indeed overtly fascist political parties and groups mushroomed in the country. Their chauvinist, anti-communist and anti-Soviet slogans, along with their declared intention of restoring the bourgeois order, soon cast doubt on the feasibility of the hopes of the Nagy group that there could be a special "Hungarian road" to socialism, since the fundamental means of production were still in public ownership.

This hope was crushed by the appearance on the scene of Cardinal József Mindszenty, who presented himself as the leader of the "nation" and the living

symbol of "resistance". In his notorious speech of 3 November, Mindszenty came out menacingly against Imre Nagy's government which he described in short as the "heir to a fallen regime". In the given situation such a statement did not augur well for the Nagy group; they were obviously being driven into the background in every field. The groups of armed insurrectionists refused to capitulate; indeed they were striving to extend their influence over the armed forces. One expression of this process was the appointment of Pál Maléter as Defence Minister. A Horthyite officer turned partisan, Maléter joined the Hungarian Communist Party and after the liberation held important posts in the army. On 25 October 1956 he went over to the side of the insurrectionists and turned the Kilián Barracks in Budapest into the most important military base of the uprising. Appointing Maléter and his associates to leading positions placed the armed forces at the mercy of the counter-revolution. Instead of restraining terrorism, these "apolitical" armed forces supported the outbursts of "white" terror, which was accompanied by a takeover of state, economic and social life: at every level in practice, the start to dismantling the socialist state.

Although Imre Nagy and his group did not cease their efforts to establish some kind of "national unity", although many writers and publicists who supported them were calling for a clampdown on the "excesses", the counter-revolution knew no mercy. Whilst on the one hand the Imre Nagy government was kept under constant pressure by the growing demands, the counter-revolutionary forces nonetheless regarded the Nagy government as an "out-dated" political formation which had completed its historical mission, and began to line up behind the new "strong man" of Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty. During the single week of its existence "neutral" Hungary witnessed numerous visits by western military attachés to the military leaders of the "revolution". Journalists, diplomats, spies, armed counter-revolutionaries and exiled politicians flocked to Hungary in large numbers. Radio Free Europe issued tactical instructions hourly on the basis of a script approved by the United States.

After Imre Nagy's treachery the revolutionary forces made attempts to organize resistance throughout the country. The first such initiative was crushed by the attack against the Budapest Party headquarters on 30 October 1956. The slaughter of the communist army officers who were defending the building and of the party secretary, Imre Mező, who had been a hero of the Spanish Civil War and the Belgian resistance, and the mutilation of their bodies, horrified even the western journalists who were present.

After the fall of this important base—which was followed by the occupation of the other party centres—armed communist groups were organized in the districts of Budapest (especially in the working class areas), the major factories, mining areas and in a number of big towns. In many places they used arms to defend the joint assets of the co-operatives. The counter-revolution failed to strike deep roots in the provinces. A "revival", advocated primarily by the former notorious gendarmes, public notaries and rich peasants, was bound to have little credibility in the village.

The process of polarization affected the armed forces as well. Those who had turned against treachery and had remained loyal to socialism and the power of the people also began to organize. Even so, rallying all these forces and launching a struggle to restore the socialist order through a civil war would have entailed enormous bloodshed and serious material losses. The creation of a new revolutionary centre was a precondition for turning the tide. Accordingly, on 1 November 1956 János Kádár, together with the revolutionary core of the former party and state leadership which rallied around him, broke off all contact with Imre Nagy and his government, and with the party leadership which was by then under the influence of the revisionist group and left Budapest. They began to reorganize a Marxist-Leninist party free of both right-wing and left-wing deviations and to establish a new revolutionary workers and peasants' government which would represent constitutional order and socialism.

The Defeat of the Counter-Revolutionary Uprising The Formation of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government

On 3 November 1956 an announcement was broadcast by the new centre of power which had been formed in Szolnok, the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. It announced the break with the Imre Nagy government—which had already taken place—and the formation of a new government. They also announced that they had turned to the Soviet Union for assistance in defeating the counter-revolutionary uprising and that she was ready to extend such assistance.

The founders of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government (Antal Apró, János Kádár, István Kossa, György Marosán, Ferenc Münnich and their associates) stressed in their proclamation: "We have been prompted to take this responsible step on recognizing that we have had no scope within Imre Nagy's government—which has been paralysed by pressure from the forces of reaction—to take action against the growing danger of counter-revolution which was threatening to annihilate our people's republic, the power of the workers and peasants, and our socialist achievements."

The government, which was headed by János Kádár, informed the people of Hungary of its programme, the main points of which were the following: the safeguarding of national independence; the protection of the socialist system, the continuation of the building of socialism; the restoration of law and order; the maintenance of friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries.

At the same time as the government's appeal was broadcast, units of the Soviet Army went into action. Meanwhile, Imre Nagy made a radio announcement in the name of his government to the effect that his cabinet was firmly in place, and that its forces would resist. Nagy also made an appeal to the United Nations and the Western Powers assistance. With that act, he crowned his treason, then sought refuge with several members of his government at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest. At the same time Cardinal Mindszenty went to the United States Embassy.

There was serious fighting in the capital (where the various groups had around 8,000–10,000 armed men) and in one or two counties. The counter-revolutionaries put up violent resistance during the first few days in the hopes that the population would come to their assistance. However, their hopes of domestic support quickly evaporated. As a result armed resistance was wiped out in two to three days. All this was far from signifying the restoration of law and order. The fighting, the war hysteria fuelled by the West and the devastation which accompanied the fighting created panic in several parts of the country. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people left Hungary (of whom about 50,000 eventually returned).

The military action of the Soviet troops merely created the possibility for consolidation; all the steps beyond that were the task and duty of the domestic forces.

The Reorganization of the Party

The most important task in this respect was reorganization of the party, the leading force of society, and deciding on the political line to be followed. The Provisional Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) met on 5–6 November 1956. The appeal issued after the meeting which was addressed to all communists and former members of the MDP said the following: "...our party is going through the most difficult phase of its history. The situation demands that all the forces of the party join together as it is only in this way that we can effectively oppose the counter-revolutionary offensive, which is aimed at restoring capitalism, and defend the power of the people...—The fundamental principles of our party remain unchanged! We are guided by the irrefutable truths of Marxism–Leninism; we are fighting for the realization of socialism; we shall defend the state of the people's democracy and its foundation, the indissoluble alliance of the workers and peasants: we belong to the great international camp of the working class." Referring to the tragic events which had taken place and the necessity arising from them to dissociate from past mistakes went on to state: "In order that our party should once again be strong and lead the masses, we must resolutely break with the mistaken policy and injurious methods of the Rákosi clique, which have shaken the confidence of the broad working masses in our party and have shaken the party's strength to its foundations.

"We must also resolutely break with the Imre Nagy–Losonczy group which, having relinquished the positions of the working class and people's power, paved the way for the forces of counter-revolution by their openly anti-Soviet appeals for struggle and their nationalist–chauvinist approach, thus betraying the cause of socialism."

The appeal ended with a call to party organizations and party members to join in the struggle for the political line outlined above. In reorganizing the party great efforts had to be made to combat the ideological impact of right-wing and left-

wing deviations and a hard—literally life and death—struggle had to be waged to defeat the forces of counter-revolution, which did everything in their power to prevent the formation of local and factory party organizations. (In some places district party secretaries were killed in the open street, while in others party leaders were threatened, distributors of *Népszabadság*, the party daily, were attacked in the street and organized groups burned copies of the paper. In the factories “workers’ councils” hindered and indeed made the work of party organizations impossible, they were refused premises and the organizers banned from entering the factories. Where party organizations had already been set up the leaders were quickly sacked. The same held true for the universities where initially the faculty council refused organizations which were already functioning entry to university premises; as a result communists had to acquire premises by “unauthorized entry”. The recognized party often had to combine legal and semi-legal struggle in order to reach the masses. In spite of this, by mid-December 1956 the MSzMP had 84,150 members (12,998 in Budapest) and 125,088 members (with 29,098 in Budapest) by mid-January and about twenty-four to twenty-five per cent of the former MDP organizations were functioning.

After this, the most important tasks of the MSzMP and the Revolutionary Workers’ and Peasants’ Government were to eliminate the ideological impact of the counter-revolution through political means and to launch the process of consolidation. Organizing reliable armed force—to combat possible provocative action by groups who wanted to disrupt the process of normalization—was another urgent task. On 9 November the government passed a resolution on organizing a detachment for the revolutionary enforcement of law and by the end of the month these law-enforcement battalions, which were some 10,000 strong, were ready for action in the capital city and in the counties.

Among the government’s earlier measures were the abolition of compulsory deliveries and ten per cent increase in wages. These measures were designed to remedy the most pressing justified grievances.

Steps were taken to reorganize the work of the state apparatus. Councils resumed their work towards the end of November. The various counter-revolutionary bodies and committees were banned and life returned to normal in the central government bodies and ministries.

The army and the police force were reorganized. The officer corps had to sign a declaration in which they pledged their readiness to subject themselves to the orders of the Revolutionary Workers’ and Peasants’ Government. About 20 per cent of the officer corps refused to sign the declaration—and were discharged. The reorganization of the army was completed by the spring of 1957, when the next generation due for their military service was called up. After that the normal course of training was resumed.

After the crushing of the armed insurrection, the counter-revolution made a final desperate bid for survival. Whereas before 4 November the revisionists had been pushed into the background, Imre Nagy and his group now served once again as a point around which the counter-revolutionary forces could rally. The “hard

core" of the clique, who had sought refuge at the Yugoslav Embassy, now mobilized their followers against the government. On their initiative the Writers' Federation adopted an anti-government resolution on 13 November. They continued by taking part in the setting up of the so-called Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council, which embraced the factory workers' councils which were set up during the counter-revolution (and which bore the mark of their origin).

Initially, the government regarded the Central Workers' Council as a negotiating partner, in the hope that the counter-revolutionary elements would, in time, be isolated and eventually driven from it. Similarly, they tried to integrate the factory workers' councils into the socialist order. However, the Central Workers' Council regarded itself as a second centre of power (it was encouraged to do so by the revisionist groups and through the radio broadcasts of western "experts"). It wanted to set up a national council and to this end it tried to blackmail the government by staging strikes, demonstrations and acts of provocation.

The youth organizations which had sprung into existence after the dissolution of the earlier united youth organization (DISz) were also used by the counter-revolutionary forces to serve their own ends. They had organized a particularly strong base in the students organization MEFESz.

The top leadership of MEFESz co-operated closely with the Central Workers' Council in the demonstrations staged at the beginning of December 1956.

The Nature and Causes of the Counter-Revolution

Although the forces of the party were tied down during this period by the struggle against the counter-revolution, the Provisional Central Committee nevertheless deemed it necessary to discuss the lessons of the past tragic period and to designate the tasks which lay ahead. Indeed it was precisely in the interests of winning this struggle that they did so. It was at that time, at the 5-6 December 1956 meeting of the Provisional Central Committee, that the historic "December Resolution" was passed; this contained statements on the nature of the events which took place between 23 October and 4 November 1956 which were of fundamental significance. "Deeply embittered by the mistakes and methods of leadership of the Rákosi-Gerő clique the majority of young people who demonstrated in Budapest on 23 October were motivated by the resolve to eliminate these mistakes and thereby strengthen the foundations of the people's democracy, so that the country could follow the road of building socialism. This was even more decisively and conspicuously so in the provinces.

All those who took part in the October events knew that in the hours leading up to the armed uprising in Budapest—at the students' demonstration in the afternoon—such explicitly counter-revolutionary slogans and demands as "Down With the Red Stars", "Don't Use the Word Comrade!", made their appearance. At the same time the burning of red flags began.

For a long time, however, the counter-revolution was carefully disguised from

the masses and only emerged openly after 30 October, at the time of the ceasefire. Those counter-revolutionary forces which killed communists and other progressive working class, peasant and intellectual workers in the streets during the first hours of the uprising, also took an organized part in the military acts of the evening of 23 October deliberately influencing the course of events to suit their own ends...

The aim of the counter-revolution was not to rectify mistakes, but to overthrow the people's power, the state of the Hungarian People's Republic and to wipe out the achievements of socialism. The truth of this must be acknowledged even though we know, that the goals and intentions of the overwhelming majority of the masses who were roused to action, were those of loyal subjects of the Hungarian People's Republic, decent workers and good patriots and not of counter-revolutionaries.

The masses who took part in the October events with honourably intentions must face up to the bitter truth that those who were part of the armed uprising against the state order of the People's Republic and its institutions were advancing the aims of counter-revolution, even though that it was not their intention.

Similarly those who staged strikes and demonstrations at the time of the armed offensive against the Hungarian People's Republic must realize that their acts undermined the strength of the state order of the Hungarian People's Republic—even though their economic and political demands were completely justified. Their actions increased the chances of counter-revolution which—as is known—was fighting to overthrow the power of the working class."

The resolution listed four basic reasons which jointly led to the tragic events of October–November 1956. These were the following:

1. The activity of the Rákosi–Gerő clique, which had a decisive influence over party and government policy and which "from the end of 1948 onwards started to deviate from the basic principles of Marxism–Leninism".

2. In precipitating the October events and their tragic climax a major role was played by the party opposition which rallied around Imre Nagy and his associates.

3. Fascist and counter-revolutionary elements who operated and organized illegally in Hungary and among the *émigrés* in the West constituted a fundamental factor in the preparation of the uprising.

4. Finally, international imperialism, which supported the counter-revolutionary insurrection as part of its global strategy of driving back socialism, progress and the national liberation movements, also played a decisive role in the October events.

The resolution not only listed the four interacting factors, but also analysed them carefully. At the same time, a historical assessment of the activity of the Rákosi–Gerő clique between 1948 and 1956 was made.

Chapter three of the resolution summed up the characteristic features and experiences of the struggle against counter-revolution which was making a last desperate attempt at survival. The changed tactics of the enemy, who wanted to preserve his influence and disrupt the process of consolidation in the guise of the "worker" and the "revolution", were pointed out. Attention was also called to the fact that the influence of the counter-revolution on the public at large was diminishing daily.

Chapter four, the closing chapter of the resolution, dealt with the activity of the

party. It stressed that if the party was able to see the events of the recent past clearly and if it drew the right lessons from them, then "every precondition existed... to enable it to fulfil its difficult and at the same time worthy historical mission with honour—in unison with the popular masses, living together with them and fighting alongside them". It was then stressed repeatedly that the party was based on the principles of Marxism–Leninism and that when a resolute break was made with the mistakes of the past, at the same time the historical continuity between the MSzMP and the finest traditions of the revolutionary working class movement should also be declared.

The resolution stated:

"Applying Marxism–Leninism in a creative way, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party wishes to achieve socialism in conformity with Hungarian characteristics and actual historical demands. It will not automatically imitate the practice of other countries building socialism, but on the basis of domestic endowments and taking historical experiences and achievements of the country into account, wants to follow a specifically Hungarian road in the building of socialism."

The document also defined the party's programme on organizational issues and working methods, retaining the principles of democratic centralism in organizational structure and decision-making. The resolution laid down as a fundamental principle that the MSzMP "should be an unsullied and puritan workers' party"; it then went on to expound how the reorganized party wanted to break decisively with the former damaging practices which had characterized the party's relationship with state and other social bodies up till then. The party's leading policy-making and ideological role in the activities of state bodies, as well as in the other social bodies belonging to the working people must be asserted not by commands and administrative means, but rather by the correct definition of goals and tasks, by proposals which serve the advance of the working people and the country and through the exemplary, modest and devoted work of party members working in these bodies.

On the one hand, the December Resolution threw light on the causes of the October–November 1956 events, and pointed the way out of the crisis for the party and the people. On the other hand, it defined the conception of the struggle on two fronts still valid today—which can ensure that similar crises are avoided. Further, it defined the working method and style which has since earned general social respect and international recognition for the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

The immediate response to the resolution was a counter-offensive by the revolutionary forces. On 6 December workers' demonstrations took place in Budapest under the banner of the party. The struggle to reconquer the streets had begun. The party's voice reached the masses quite literally in battles, as the first demonstrations also saw acts of armed provocation and the volunteers who sold newspapers and stuck up posters often had to defend themselves against violent attacks.

Resolute steps were taken to wipe out organizations under revisionist and enemy influence. On 9 December the regional workers' councils were dissolved, the leaders of the Central Workers' Council, who had organized further acts of provocation,

were arrested. (Some of these acts of provocation did in fact materialize in the province, claiming numerous victims.) The autonomy of the Writers' Federation and the Journalists' Federation was suspended because both organizations were operating under the influence of the Imre Nagy group.

In order to frustrate the offensive of the revolutionary forces, by this time the outlawed regional workers' councils prepared to stage a general strike on 11-12 December. Although the strike failed to materialize, this, together with the acts of armed provocation which served to create the "right atmosphere", contributed to the introduction of summary jurisdiction in relation to acts of armed provocation (this was shortly extended to cover other counter-revolutionary acts as well).

The courts resumed their activity in December 1956 and counter-revolutionaries caught by the investigating bodies were put on trial. The leaders of the Imre Nagy group, who left the Yugoslav Embassy at the end of November 1956 and headed for Rumania, were also tried. At the trial, which took place between February and June 1958, Imre Nagy, Pál Maléter and two others were sentenced to death, while the other defendants were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Géza Losonczy died during the trial. The death sentences were carried out in June 1958.

Consolidation

After the failure of the general strike the normal production was gradually resumed. Alongside the local party organizations, the party's leaders played an important role in this. From December 1956 onwards they attended dozens of workers' rallies and in tough and open debates contributed, through their personal appearance, to the reversal of mood in the factories. From the second half of December onwards production was running smoothly in almost every factory in Hungary. This was all the more important since the events of the counter-revolution had inflicted a loss of about twenty billion (10⁹) *forints* on the national economy, four-fifths of which stemmed from losses in production.

In agriculture the main aims of consolidation were considered to be the stabilization and strengthening of the worker-peasant alliance. Accordingly, grievances which had affected a majority of the peasantry during the first half of the fifties had to be rectified. Their confidence had to be strengthened and their willingness to produce boosted. The first measure introduced with this in mind was the abolition of compulsory deliveries, together with writing off all arrears in this field. A system of purchasing contracts was introduced instead to ensure future supplies and this also provided the peasantry with a secure market.

The government allowed peasants to leave the co-operative farms (together with the equipment and livestock which they had contributed earlier.) This led to some singular consequences. Whilst the co-operative farms stayed together during the counter-revolutionary offensive, around January 1957 a growing number of peasants began to leave the co-operatives, as a result of which a large number of them were dissolved. Compared with the situation in mid-October, sixty per cent of the

co-operatives and membership remained in the socialist sector and the proportion of the arable land in this sector fell even more. In spite of this, it was right and necessary to do this as boosting agricultural production and, ultimately, the future of the co-operative movement hinged on winning the confidence of the peasantry.

The MSzMP made no secret of the fact that the idea of the socialist reorganization of agriculture had not been abandoned — given the right political and economic conditions. Before that however boosting agricultural production and strengthening the socialist sector were considered to be the most important tasks of the party; the co-operative farms which remained were left to serve as the basis of the socialist restructuring of agriculture along the lines laid down by Lenin.

The other socialist countries, above all the Soviet Union, made large contributions to the consolidation of economic life and production in Hungary. This help came in many forms, ranging from free food, building material and raw material deliveries to long-term credits and the provision of substantial quantities of convertible foreign exchange. Without this assistance the comparatively rapid acceleration in production and keeping the population supplied with goods would have been impossible. But the political help given by the socialist countries was at least as valuable. Between November 1956 and January 1957 almost every European socialist country, as well as party and government delegations from China, paid visit to Budapest to assure the MSzMP and the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government of their solidarity. In his speech at Pula 11 November 1956, Tito, Chairman of the Yugoslav Communists' League and President of Yugoslavia, described the military help given by the Soviet Union in defeating the counter-revolution as an inevitable necessity and declared that the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government and the MSzMP leadership "represented what was most honourable in Hungary".

Substantial support also came from communist and workers' parties in the capitalist countries. In this connection special mention must be made of the articles and statements made about the Hungarian question by Palmiro Togliatti, First Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, which made a major contribution to the clarification of views.

Solidarity and assistance were vitally necessary because at the same time the Western Powers made every effort to discredit the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, and to isolate it at every international level. From November 1956 onwards the reports of the "Committee of Five" on the "Hungarian Question" featured on the agenda of the United Nations for six years. Every year, the mandate of the Hungarian UN delegation was questioned and each year diplomatic pressure was brought to bear upon the Hungarian government to receive the UN Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld (a Swedish diplomat who at that time sympathized with the Western Powers), or the special UN commission so that they could "investigate" the situation, the activities of the government and so on in an official capacity. Naturally, the Hungarian government rejected both these attempts at intervention and the reports of the UN commission, which relied exclusively on hostile sources and which gradually drifted further and further away from

reality, until life itself removed this "question" from the UN agenda. The meeting at the end of February 1957 of the Provisional Central Committee was indicative of the extent of the consolidation. At this stage the MSzMP had 190,000 members and its central newspaper, *Népszabadság*, had a daily circulation of over 600,000. The resolution of 26 February was concerned with further strengthening the party ideologically and organizationally. Issues pertaining to building the party were also dealt with; the sectarian phenomena which still persisted were criticized and a deadline—1 May 1957—set for members of the old party, the MDP, to register with the MSzMP. (By this time MSzMP membership had risen to 283,000, four-fifths of whom had previously been Communist Party members.)

Enlarging on the December Resolution, the February statement gave a more detailed analysis of the activities of the Imre Nagy group, explicitly branding them as traitors, and emphatically calling attention to the need for a struggle against revisionism.

As far as running the state was concerned the resolution expressed satisfaction at the signs of consolidation: that parliamentary committees had started work again and the activity of the People's Front had revived. Improvement in the state guidance of economic and cultural life and the development of domestic policy were considered decisive tasks.

In connection with the economy the most important decision was that a three-year economic plan to be launched in January 1958 was to be prepared. The resolution dealt with the work of the mass organizations. The Tenth Plenary Session of the Central Council of Trade Unions (SZOT) adopted the standpoint—still valid today—that the trade unions are autonomous, although not independent organizations.

The resolution also touched upon the women's movement and called for the establishment of a united communist youth federation. Having fulfilled their historical role, organizations of young workers, peasants which had replaced the united youth organization at the end of October 1956 now gave way to the Hungarian Communist Youth Union (KISZ).

At the end of February the first units of the Workers' Militia were formed in Budapest (the Provisional Central Committee adopted a resolution that a Workers' Militia should be organized on 12 February 1957).

This confidence was further strengthened by the mass rallies staged at the end of March 1957, the Workers' Militia's first parade in Budapest and the May Day parade of 1957 in which some 400,000 people took part. The 9–11 May 1957 session of Parliament was an important stage in political consolidation. The report of the Presidential Council was delivered by István Dobi, and that of the government by János Kádár. They gave a retrospective account of the events of the counter-revolution, laying special emphasis on the treacherous activity of the Imre Nagy group. The Prime Minister's report reviewed the achievements of consolidation as well as the measures which had been taken to eliminate earlier mistakes. Parliament endorsed the new coat of arms of the Hungarian People's Republic, which is still in use today.

The June 1957 Conference of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

The meeting of Parliament was followed by the national conference (27–29 June 1957) of the MSzMP which, among other things, issued the following statement: "In the tenacious struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces, the reorganization of the party has been completed." At this stage the MSzMP had 350,000 members, 85 per cent of whom had been members of the MDP as well.

The national conference, which almost played the role of a congress, listened to the report by the Provisional Central Committee, took a stand in relation to that report, and ended the provisional character of party leadership. The report of the Provisional Central Committee was presented by János Kádár. Both the report and the resolution stated that the party was undergoing healthy development and was gathering strength. "Indicative of the party's strength," said First Secretary Kádár, "are its clear ideological vision, political, ideological and organizational unity, discipline and, perhaps above all, its influence over the masses outside the party".

Accordingly, the conference paid special attention to the issues of the policy of alliance. The delegates agreed with the stand adopted by the Provisional Central Committee in which they rejected the restoration of the multi-party system, an issue on which they had been subjected to pressures in November 1957. However, it was necessary for the one-party system which had evolved historically to go forward in conjunction with the Patriotic People's Front—and this was not merely permissible under the given circumstances but obligatory. For the Front rallied people, loyal to socialism, who were not members of the MSzMP or had earlier been active in other parties, and who were ready to take part in the building of socialism and to help in the process of consolidation. The resolution stated: "In our country people who are not members of the party may work in any public post—be it social or state, be it the lowest or the highest position—with the exception of party posts."

The report gave an account of the development of the party from the liberation up to the time of the conference and drew the lessons from this development, with special reference to the crimes and mistakes of the sectarian-dogmatic clique, the treachery of the revisionists and all such manifestations from which the Party would have to dissociate itself in future.

Accordingly, priority was given to ideological work. It was decided to reorganize party education, to restore the teaching of Marxism at universities and colleges, to organize ideological work groups, etc.

The resolution put forward twin objectives for economic policy: building a socialist society and at the same time raising living standards of the working people.

As far as socialist industrialization was concerned the resolution stated that in addition to the necessary development of heavy industry, branches of industry best suited to Hungarian conditions must also be developed.

The party conference expressed approval for the policy of assisting private farming. This, as the resolution stated, "was not only an issue of economic policy, but also an important political question pertaining to the development of the worker—

peasant alliance." At the same time it stressed that the socialist transformation of agriculture was a central issue in the building of socialism.

On questions of culture the conference took the stand that "we must launch a decisive counter-offensive against the spread of counter-revolution in our cultural life".

At the party conference, only József Révai questioned the political line which had been followed by the Provisional Central Committee since November 1956. Révai tried to find excuses for the sectarian-dogmatic clique and levelled unjustified criticism at the MSzMP. The party conference firmly rejected Révai's intervention, although due respect was paid to this outstanding activist of the Hungarian working class movement.

The conference adopted the party's organization rules—as put forward by György Marosán—and elected the MSzMP's leading bodies (Political Committee members: First Secretary János Kádár, Antal Apró, Béla Biszku, Lajos Fehér, Jenő Fock, Gyula Kállai, Károly Kiss, György Marosán, Ferenc Münnich, Sándor Rónai, Miklós Somogyi, with Zoltán Komócsin and Dezső Nemes as alternate members).

After the conference the MSzMP gave increased prominence to ideological and cultural activity—in line with the spirit of the conference. This was particularly important because it was in this sphere that the hangover from revisionist ideology was most persistent. The lessons of the October events also demonstrated that ideological trends which were thought to have become outdated were still very much alive and influential.

In line with the ideological offensive called for by the conference the leadership and bodies of the MSzMP and the ideological working parties set up after the conference published a number of documents on topical ideological and cultural issues. A common feature of the standpoints taken was that, on the one hand, they put forward the party's theoretical viewpoint explicitly and, on the other, wanted to ensure that these views were implemented in a political way, through ideological struggle. This was responsible for the Political Committee's September 1957 resolution on a number of issues pertaining to party guidance of literature, and on the development of Hungarian literature in the post-liberation era. A working party report on the activity of the populist writers was similar. As a result consolidation speeded up perceptibly in the field of literary life, literary journals were once again published, the Literary Council resumed operation and writers who during the previous period had found themselves on the side of the opposition could now resume work in a relaxed atmosphere. At the same time, a new, talented and politically committed generation of writers was presented to the reading public.

In July 1958 the Political Committee also defined its ideas on the party's attitude to religious ideology. This document still serves as a valid basis for the church policy of the party and government. In contrast with previous ideas the resolution explained that even under socialism the Churches would survive for a long time to come and therefore efforts should be made to achieve stable co-operation based on principle with them while at the same time rejecting the hostile efforts of clerical

reaction. The joint work of atheists and religious believers in building socialism constituted the objective basis for co-operation. The resolution stressed that all this did not signify an ideological compromise, that religion was not to be regarded as a private business by a Marxist-Leninist party and its members, and the party considered that it had the task and duty to propagate its own ideology, including principled struggle against a religious world outlook.

After the counter-revolution the standpoint adopted on the issue of bourgeois nationalism and socialist patriotism (1959) was also extremely timely. This clarified the historical roots of Hungarian nationalism, and assessed the struggle which the working class had been waging against nationalism for almost a century. The document also dealt with the role of nationalism in the 1956 counter-revolution, calling for the strengthening of socialist patriotism as the principal weapon in the struggle against nationalism. The content of socialist patriotism could be defined as follows: struggle for the defence and propagation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the unity of the socialist camp and the international working class movement, and the establishment of socialist national unity.

The directives on cultural policy adopted by the Central Committee in July 1958 contained a summary of the party's tasks in relation to ideology and culture. The document stated that it was the party's task to direct and guide the socialist cultural revolution. It then went on to elaborate the goals of this revolution — assessing the efforts of the working class movement in this respect both prior to the liberation and during the post-1945 period. It underlined the most urgent tasks, including ideological education among the intelligentsia and young people. It dealt with the development of the arts, and stressed that the main way in which party guidance operated in this field was through ideological influence.

The political, economic and cultural successes of 1957 healed most of the wounds inflicted by the counter-revolution. Both industrial and agricultural output surpassed the 1955 level. The supply of commodities improved, the real wages of blue- and white-collar workers increased, as did the real income of the peasantry, and 50,000 new homes were built in 1957. These achievements ensured renewed development in the building of socialism, and provided a promising opening for the three-year economic plan which was to be launched in January 1958.

The party ensured every favourable opportunity for strengthening its links with the masses, in order to boost policy of alliance.

A firm and close contact between the party and the working class was a precondition for this. In October 1958 a Central Committee resolution dealt with the situation of the working class and the tasks arising from this. The resolution was preceded by careful analysis; this, too, was a manifestation of the party's new style of work.

The resolution stated: the leading role of the working class is realized through the party, although this leading role is only asserted if the working class are aware of their responsibility in the exercise of power, and the leadership of the country, and if they take an active part in realizing the party's goals. The resolution also called for an improvement in the ratio of working class members within the party.

The activity of the mass organizations mirrored the liveliness in political life: the trade union congress, the national conference of the Hungarian Communist Youth Union (KISZ), and the reorganization of the Women's Council marked the completion of the process of consolidation and the resumption of the normal course of building socialism.

The Patriotic People's Front, the mass movement which embodies popular-national unity, also consolidated its own organization and the principles and forms of party guidance in the People's Front were also defined. In 1958 parliamentary and local council elections were organized by the People's Front. The candidates of the People's Front included leaders of the former coalition parties, for example Béla Kovács who has been secretary of the old Smallholders' Party and the party of that name which reappeared in 1956. They took 90 per cent of the vote.

The Socialist Reorganization of Agriculture

At the end of 1958 the successes in the building of socialism once again raised the question of the socialist transformation of agriculture. The issue was debated at the December 1958 meeting of the Central Committee, before which numerous discussions and preliminary studies were carried out. What the December 1958 meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee had to decide was whether or not the conditions were ripe for such a change. It would be unhistorical and an oversimplification to judge the debate, and those who contributed to it solely on the basis of who voted for or against the speed up of the reorganization.

The political conditions clearly favoured acceleration of the reorganization. The same could not however be said of the economic conditions, which were no less important. Economic consolidation was completed by the end of 1957, and the three-year plan was launched in January 1958. Results in the first year were substantially better than had been planned, with industrial output going up by eleven per cent, half the target for the full three years. Compared with the 1957 level agricultural production also increased by the expected amount—four per cent—and output in the socialist sector went up faster than average. The average income of the co-operative peasantry was higher than that of the private farmers.

However, as was justly emphasized at the party meetings in the various counties, which were held before the Central Committee meeting, the superiority of the socialist sector was not yet clear-cut. The proposal was that with adequate state assistance reorganization was feasible.

At the Central Committee meeting a debate developed over whether the reorganization was timely (namely, that it might possibly damage the worker-peasant alliance), the pace of development (which could only be realized insofar as the economic preconditions were assured) and over the possibility of carrying out the reorganization while at the same time stepping up agricultural output. How the principle of voluntary joining should be interpreted was also debated.

The Central Committee's December 1958 resolution was very important from the point of view of the country's further development. The socialist reorganization of agriculture is one of the most difficult tasks in the building of socialism.

Hundreds of communists and non-communists, workers and professionals—who whole-heartedly supported socialism—went to the villages and talked with the peasants. Members of the old co-operative farms also did important work in this field. They explained the perspectives of a new peasant life through patient propaganda. As a result, the doubts entertained by the peasantry gradually disappeared and the fear of a new, unfamiliar future was dissipated.

In the summer of 1959 about half the arable land in the country belonged to the socialist sector. Unlike the previous years, in one or two villages the entire peasantry joined the co-operative farm movement *en masse*. After March 1959 the Central Committee suspended the mass-scale reorganization temporarily. The party leadership regrouped their forces in order to ensure political and economic consolidation in the newly formed co-operative farms.

A number of important measures made a substantial contribution to the success of the reorganization. A case in point was the introduction of compulsory land rent. Land taken into the co-operative farms only became co-operative property after it was purchased; up till then the former owners received annual rent which depended in size on how much land they had formerly owned. This decree was particularly important from the point of view of any decision made by the middle strata of the peasantry. Just as important was the fact that every member of a co-operative farm was entitled to a household plot of a given size, which initially served to provide the peasant and his family with food, but which now produces much of the fruit, meat and eggs which are sold on the market. The extension of social security and the retirement pension scheme to the members of co-operative farms was very well received. Another novelty which the peasantry regarded as a sign of confidence was that the co-operative members were given a decisive say in the selection of local leaders, the co-operative farm chairman and brigade leaders. Generally speaking, the peasants usually made a good choice, selecting those most suited to guide the work as their leaders.

State assistance to agriculture took the form of increasing the number of investment projects. The ratio of agricultural investment rose by 13.8 per cent between 1950 and 1954, by an average of 17.4 per cent between 1958–9 and by 20.8 per cent in 1960. Large-scale agricultural investment demonstrated that a healthily developing national economy was largely able to meet the demands incumbent upon it as a result of the socialist organization of agriculture, although the demands did increase more rapidly than the available resources. The achievements in the socialist reorganization of agriculture in the winter of 1958–9 indicated that with the completion of consolidation a new phase in the building of socialism had begun. The situation arising out of this posed greater demands on party and state bodies—economically, politically and ideologically. In March 1959 the MSzMP Central Committee decided to convene the Seventh Congress of the party. Another

resolution called for a speed up in the building of socialism in other areas of the economy as well, especially in the development of industry.

The newly-formed co-operative farms were faced with a difficult start and major assignment. Collective work was strange for the private farmer of yesterday. The management of large farms, often hundreds or even thousands of acres in size, posed big problems. Drawing up annual plans for production, introducing business organization, and starting the work of large-scale farming were all equally new and problematic tasks. Moreover, steps had to be taken to see that the income of the new co-operative members should not fall below that of the previous year, when they worked as private farmers, and that it should, from then on, continue to grow from year to year.

Party and state bodies extended substantial help in launching the new life. Industrial workers acted as patrons to the new co-operative farms. In 1959 five hundred party activists went to work in the new co-operatives—as chairmen, party secretaries or agronomists.

It was very important that the co-operative farms put into effect a system of income distribution which would act as an incentive for co-operative members, promote the involvement of family members in the cultivation of the collective land and help improve work discipline. Families were allotted land for plant cultivation, as a reward for higher yields.

The socialist reorganization of agriculture created the objective conditions and—in part—the subjective ones too, for the transformation of a peasantry, which had previously been kept apart on the basis of wealth, into a socialist co-operative peasantry.

The issue of what should be done with the former exploiters was raised by the transformation more sharply than ever before. The MSzMP opposed the idea of harassing those former exploiters who were loyal to the system. It was this policy which the party leadership developed still further during the socialist reorganization of agriculture. Formerly well-to-do peasants who had employed waged labour were also allowed to join the co-operatives and to fill certain posts after two years of honest work.

By the beginning of 1961 the mass reorganization was virtually completed. The socialist sector in agriculture (co-operative and state farms) now accounted for about ninety per cent of arable land in Hungary. The work of reorganization took three years to complete. In the first year the share of arable land farmed co-operatively rose to thirty-four per cent, in the second to fifty-six per cent and in the third to seventy-eight per cent. (About fourteen per cent of the arable land was cultivated by the state farms.)

The second part of the “double task” was successfully accomplished in December 1958: agricultural output grew significantly during the period of reorganization. It increased by eleven per cent during the three-year plan period and by 8.5 per cent in 1958–61, when large-scale reorganization was taking place—despite two years of very unfavourable weather—and procurement rose by 13.5 per cent.

The Seventh and Eighth Congresses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party

The MSzMP held its Seventh Congress between 30 November and 5 December 1959. The Central Committee's report and the resolutions passed by the congress provided in-depth analyses of the historical experiences of the period which had elapsed since the defeat of the counter-revolution. The congress endorsed the evaluation of the causes which led to the counter-revolution in the December 1959 resolution. It pointed out that the decisive source for the rapid consolidation and the successes in building socialism was the principled policy of the party which had been vindicated in practice, as well as the fact that the Hungarian People's Republic was developing within the framework of a socialist world order. The socialist countries, and above all the Soviet Union, had extended military, economic and political help to the Hungarian people.

The congress endorsed the measures taken by the Central Committee to speed up the building of socialism, with a view to completing the process of laying the foundations of socialism in Hungary in the years ahead. This demanded the further strengthening of people's power, further development of industry and the national economy, the strengthening of cultural and ideological work and the leading role of the party and, first and foremost, the completion of the socialist transformation of agriculture.

The MSzMP Seventh Congress gave great impetus to the three-year plan, which was completed at the end of 1960. Targets, raised during the plan period, were met: instead of the envisaged thirteen per cent, the national income rose by twenty per cent, industrial output rose by forty per cent instead of twenty-two per cent, and agriculture by the envisaged twelve per cent. Per capita personal consumption rose by seventeen to nineteen per cent.

The second five-year plan was launched under favourable conditions from several points of view. The targets of the three-year plan had been overfulfilled substantially; the socialist reorganization of agriculture had been carried through; and economic co-operation between the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) countries was intensifying.

The second five-year plan envisaged a thirty-six per cent growth in the national income, a forty-eight to fifty per cent rise in industrial output and a twenty-two to twenty-three per cent increase in agricultural production. Consumption by the population was expected to increase by twenty-two to twenty-three per cent. The plan prescribed a comparatively modest growth for industrial production, placing emphasis rather on profitability, and above all on raising the level of technology and improving efficiency to the extent where it would account for at least two-thirds of the growth in output.

Held at the end of 1962, the Eighth Congress of the MSzMP stated that the socialist transformation of agriculture marked the completion of laying the foundations of socialism in Hungary. Socialist ownership and relations of production had become predominant; the productive forces had developed substantially, there had

been noteworthy achievements in the cultural revolution; and class relations had undergone a fundamental change.

The Central Committee meeting of August 1962, which formed part of the preparations for the Eighth Congress, also marked the end of a historical chapter—the cult of the personality and the crimes committed in its name. After demonstrating the historical roots of this period and making decisions on the question of liability, the document stated: “it is a historic achievement of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, and one which is recognized by the Hungarian people, that it has cleared up the question of the cult of the personality once and for all. Every justified grievance which could be remedied has been remedied; the party has been purged of members of the Rákosi clique, who abused power to the detriment of the people, and the communist movement. The injurious methods introduced by the Rákosi clique have been eradicated and law and order and the judicial authorities have been strengthened. Legality has been restored, and the socialist order consolidated. Every law-abiding citizen of the Hungarian People’s Republic can live and work in peace in our socialist homeland.”

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on the Road to Socialism (1962–80)

The International Situation

Changes in the international balance of power in the sixties and seventies exerted strong influence over developments in Hungary—as they had done earlier. During this period the frontlines of the international class struggle became more complicated than previously.

Whereas in the fifties a more or less united imperialist camp confronted a similarly united socialist camp, during the sixties a powerful shift in the balance of power took place in the capitalist world. Although she remained the foremost power in the western world, the United States lost her previously unquestioned leading role. A number of capitalist countries began to pursue independent policies and dissociated themselves from the most aggressive American circles. Nations of the “Third World” appeared in the arena of international politics, acquiring an increasingly bigger say in the fate of humanity. At the same time conflicts arose in the socialist camp as well, of which that between the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union and her allies being the gravest.

The socialist countries, and above all the Soviet Union, continued to wage steadfast struggle to prevent the outbreak of a third world war, to halt the arms race and to promote the concept and practice of peaceful co-existence. They were supported in these efforts by the working class movements of the capitalist countries, the national liberation movements and those sober leaders in a number of capitalist countries who took a realistic view of things. Although this process suffered set-backs from time to time, it was primarily thanks to this policy that humanity was able to avoid the catastrophe of a nuclear war.

Over the past twenty years humanity has lived through several events which took the world to the edge of the abyss.

One such situation arose in autumn 1962 when the United States blockaded Cuba. As a result of firm diplomatic action on the part of the Soviet Union, in the end the integrity of the Republic of Cuba was defended and the threat of US invasion averted.

In 1964 the United States launched war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The Americans used the most up-to-date techniques of modern war against the Vietnamese people. They destroyed the country’s most important industrial and transport centres, laid waste the cultivated land and used chemicals to wipe out the forests. Millions of Vietnamese people died in a war fought against terrible odds.

In the second half of the sixties old tensions were rekindled. Backed by the United States, Israel launched her third war against the neighbouring Arab countries—Egypt, Syria and Jordan—and occupied large territories, forcing the population to flee. This perpetuated the Middle East crisis, triggering off another war in 1973. To this very day the situation in the Middle East continues to be explosive, posing a serious threat to world peace.

During the period in question the gap between the developed countries and the nations of the Third World widened. Having rid themselves of the colonial yoke, these peoples were immediately confronted with serious problems. They sought various solutions to these problems. Some chose the direction of non-capitalist development. The primitive socio-economic conditions which prevail in these countries (the lack of a modern industry, tribal and national rivalry, etc.) rule out the possibility of socialist development along the lines of the European model. Nonetheless, imperialism has lost its grip over these countries.

Significant changes have taken place on the political map of the European continent too. While at the beginning of the period under discussion fascist dictatorships ruled in Greece, Spain and Portugal, today there are no fascist governments in Europe. The foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany has also changed favourably: the Social Democrat–Free Democrat Party coalition which came to power at the end of the sixties took steps to bring about the normalization of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the socialist countries, the German Democratic Republic among them. These positive steps turned out to be of decisive significance for European security.

Consequently, from the mid-sixties, the international political climate was determined by détente. Economic links between East and West expanded: trade between the European Common Market and the CMEA countries increased to many times its previous level. Joint enterprises were set up in the field of production and technical co-operation, and scientific co-operation intensified. (A spectacular example of this was the joint Soviet–American space mission, the successful “Soyuz–Apollo” flight.) Tourism grew to mass proportions: millions of people from the socialist countries travelled to the West and vice versa. The oft-mentioned “iron curtain” disappeared; people belonging to the two world systems established personal links.

It was in this atmosphere that the leaders of thirty-five European nations, the United States and Canada gathered in Helsinki in 1975. The Helsinki Conference strengthened the policy of détente. Among other things it proclaimed the inviolability of European frontiers, thereby outlawing revanchism.

From the mid-seventies onwards the economy of the advanced capitalist nations was shaken by serious crisis. Triggered off by the oil price explosion, the crisis quickly spread to other areas of the economy as well. In its wake emerged inflation of unparalleled magnitude and proportions. The value of the US dollar, once thought to have been unshakable, declined steadily, as did the British pound and the French franc, not to mention the Italian lira. The most advanced capitalist country was now faced with a growing trade deficit. Unemployment of a magnitude

comparable only to that of the Great Depression struck Western Europe and the United States.

Since the European socialist countries have established closer than ever links with the advanced capitalist nations over the past ten years (livelier foreign trade, credit, oil purchasing, etc.), they were also affected by the economic slump. In the socialist countries, too, the pace of growth slowed, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the foreign trade balance, and consumer prices rose.

After the promising changes of the first half of the seventies dark clouds began to appear on the horizon of international politics. Conservative forces forged ahead in the United States and a number of other capitalist countries. They increased spending on armaments and refused to conduct negotiations on military detente.

Economic Development

After laying the foundations for socialism, the Hungarian economy continued to follow the path of extensive development for some time. This meant that quantity played a decisive role in every area of production. Generally speaking, demand was always greater than supply, therefore greater and greater quantities of goods were required. Moreover, employment opportunities had to be created for the millions of workers who now had a constitutional right to work. During the period of feverish industrialization hundreds of factories and industrial plants were built in areas which had previously been almost entirely agricultural.

To produce as much as possible, regardless of the quality and the costs—this in essence was the slogan though it was never officially declared of extensive economic growth. Costs and the question whether certain commodities were necessary were issues of secondary importance. During the second half of the sixties this irrational economic mentality drained the national income to such an extent that the questions of quality, profitability and efficiency had to be faced.

Changes in price trends and an increasingly unfavourable international foreign trade environment in the seventies forced Hungary to discontinue unprofitable production and to revamp the commodity structure.

In 1966 the Ninth Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party adopted a resolution on drafting a reform of economic management. Prepared by the best experts with extreme care, this reform was inaugurated on January 1968.

The aim of the reform—known as the New Economic Mechanism, or NEM—was that the Hungarian economy should produce those goods and in such quantities as would ensure a steady development of the national economy, a gradual rise in living standards, dynamic growth of foreign trade and constant strengthening of the country's defence capabilities. Accordingly, the NEM increased the independence of enterprises, as well as their responsibility for fashioning the structure of their own production. The role of central production directives was decreased and the state's role in influencing production was ensured primarily through economic

means (prices and credit policy). A price policy was introduced which realistically reflected actual production costs. Increasingly, the principle of economic incentives for both companies and individuals was asserted.

The economic reform results in big achievements. The transformation of the structure of the national economy speeded up, profitable branches of industry such as engineering, the chemical industry and telecommunications developed at a faster than average pace. An increasing proportion of growth stemmed from the improvement in efficiency.

It was at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies that the socialist organization of Hungarian agriculture began to bear fruit. Hungarian agriculture entered an era of mechanized production on an industrial scale. All the major work processes were mechanized and within a very short period the use of fertilizers more than trebled. In the seventies the yields of certain agricultural crops doubled. Whilst at the beginning of the sixties Hungary was not self-sufficient as far as bread crops were concerned, from the seventies on Hungarian agriculture produced surpluses which allowed for substantial grain exports. Per capita meat production caught up with that in the most advanced European countries and the world's leading meat producers.

Like all important social measures, the economic reform also had impact which was manifold. The growth in efficiency and company independence was inevitably coupled with a differentiation in individual incomes. Egalitarianism, a traditional socialist value, lost its former prominence. This aroused discontent among sizeable sectors of the industrial labour force and a number of leaders were also noticeably reluctant to implement reform measures which were strange for them. As a result the reform process ground to a halt during the mid-seventies. This coincided with the beginning of the world-wide recession.

The earlier dynamic development slowed down. The Hungarian economy was hit particularly hard by the spiralling increase in the cost of energy (above all crude oil). In foreign trade, the terms of exchange began to show a very unfavourable trend as far as Hungary was concerned: the country had to export many times as much in order to be able to finance imports of the same quantity and quality. This led to a serious deficit in the balance of foreign trade. Hungary's indebtedness was reaching proportions which were beginning to threaten the stability of the economy.

In 1978 the party and state leadership introduced measures which created the conditions for a favourable change. The measures introduced to restore the balance of foreign trade already began to bear fruit in 1979 and 1980. Despite serious losses, it seemed that as a result of the reform the Hungarian economy was able to show adequate flexibility and to adapt to new circumstances.

Changes in the Standard of Living

The sixties and seventies brought about radical changes in the living standards of the Hungarian people. As a result of a lengthy and historically unprecedented period of a steady four to five per cent rise in real wages, the real wages of both blue- and white-collar workers doubled. The growth in the proportion of those gainfully employed was accompanied by an even more rapid growth in the level of consumption which trebled.

This increase meant above all that worries over the basic necessities of life could fade into the background. Before the liberation poverty afflicted the majority of Hungary's population and even in 1950 one in three still belonged to the impoverished category. However, by the seventies only some ten to fifteen per cent of the population was still affected by poverty, for the most part certain strata and groups in particularly unfavourable position (people in the small-income bracket with large families, certain categories of pensioners, single-parent families, etc.). Modern technology has penetrated Hungarian households. Today almost every household is equipped with a washing-machine, a refrigerator and a vacuum cleaner. The appearance of the television set in Hungarian homes was of immense significance, primarily as a factor which affected people's lifestyle. During this period buying a car became a reality for the broad sections of the public. The spread of cars made people mobile, they were now able to discover not only their own country, but much more beyond its frontiers. Tourism in particular gave content to the leisure time of millions.

Particularly conspicuous changes took place in the countryside. Peasant work in the traditional sense is fast disappearing. The fact that the energy consumed by agriculture has surpassed that of most industrial branches underlines this. A generation have grown up in the villages who find it far more difficult to handle work with traditional agricultural tools than with modern technology. In general the village family has changed to one in which some of the active earners work in industry or the service sector, while the others work in agriculture. The income of the rural population has caught up with and indeed surpassed that of town-dwellers. The poverty, backwardness and vulnerability which characterized the world of the village for centuries disappeared in the span of a single generation.

Tremendous efforts were being made to improve the housing situation. Over one and a half million new homes were built in Hungary between 1960 and 1980, the majority with two or more rooms. As a result the ratio of occupants per room dropped from 2.36 in 1960 to 1.51 in 1980. While in 1960 only seventy-five per cent of all homes had electricity and only twenty-three per cent had running water, by 1980 this ratio had risen to ninety-eight per cent and sixty-five per cent, respectively. The biggest advances in housing have been made in the villages: adobe houses with no amenities have been replaced by homes furnished with every modern convenience.

Despite the unprecedented building programme, the housing problem continues to be the most pressing problem as far as Hungary's policy on living standards is

concerned. The housing shortage is most acute in Budapest and the major towns and hits young working people hardest.

The general rise in the standard of living has raised numerous problems. Whilst for instance medical care has become a constitutional right, hospital facilities (number of beds) have scarcely improved, and this has led to overcrowded conditions in the hospitals, and a decline in the standards of medical care. The extension of the retirement pension scheme to the co-operative peasantry has substantially increased the number of pensioners, from 800,000 in 1960 to over two million in 1980. The money paid out in pensions accounted for 2.8 per cent of the national output in 1960 and for 8.8 per cent in 1980. Overshadowing these achievements is the fact that pensions in Hungary are not linked to inflation; because of the limited resources the state can only safeguard the purchasing power of the lowest pensions.

In 1967 a child care allowance scheme was introduced. Under this scheme working mothers are entitled to spend three years at home to look after a child up to that age while their jobs are kept open for them and they drew a regular monthly allowance from the state. At present 80 per cent of all mothers avail themselves of this opportunity. Over the past twenty years the number of those entitled to family allowance has doubled (in 1975 the family allowance was extended to agricultural workers on the same terms as other workers). However, since the state cannot defray the entire cost of raising children the difference in the incomes of individual families largely depends on the number of children.

Obviously behind the overall living standard statistics there are substantial differences. The main trend of the past twenty years has been the levelling up of incomes. While in 1962 there was a sixfold difference between families in the lowest and highest income bracket, the gap closed in to a fourfold difference by 1977.

Changes in the standard of living are mirrored in the changes in the structure of consumption. Whereas in 1960 the population spent 40.6 per cent of their income on food, this ratio dropped to 29.3 per cent by 1980 (in spite of constantly rising food prices; and the pattern of food consumption has changed, for instance there was a substantial growth in meat consumption). The money spent on road vehicles was one per cent in 1960 as against five per cent in 1980. A negative factor is that the population still spend a high proportion of their income on coffee, tobacco and beverages.

During the sixties tourism began to enjoy a boom which peaked at the end of the seventies. Travelling individually or on package tours, millions of Hungarians set out for nearby and distant lands. In these years Hungarians made 5,100,000 trips abroad yearly, while 15 million foreigners entered Hungary. (Naturally, this represents a smaller number of people; indeed one person could have made the trip in and out of the country on several occasions during the year.)

The unfavourable economic trends have meant that the rise in living standards has slowed down in the early eighties. Per capita real income went up by nine per cent, less than envisaged, during the fifth five-year plan period.

The principal objectives of the standard of living policy remain unchanged: a

secure livelihood through full employment and social welfare benefits; the differentiation of wages on the basis of performance and the gradual reduction of unjustified differences in family incomes, with the allocation of an increasing proportion of social benefit to the various classes and strata.

Classes, Strata and Related Interests

Laying the foundations of socialism in Hungary has, in essence, meant that society has become a homogeneous one; social differences have been levelled up though, naturally, differences and occasionally conflicts of interest between certain social groups and strata have been reproduced.

The structure of Hungarian society has changed substantially over the past twenty years: the working class increased in proportion from 50.8 per cent in 1960 to 59 per cent in 1980, while the peasantry dropped from 30.7 (in 1960 there were still many private farms) to thirteen per cent. The professional and white-collar strata, an entirely different social group as far as their living conditions and incomes are concerned, account for 25 per cent. About three per cent of the population work as self-employed artisans, retailers or free-lance intellectuals.

In addition to the aforementioned major social classes and groups, a classification based primarily on forms of ownership, there are other criteria on which the stratification of society can be based.

Numerous social groups are formed on the basis of the position occupied in the work process, the nature of work, the size of income, the way in which it is earned, the location size and housing conditions of the place on which they live, and the education which they have received.

Naturally, society may also be divided into different groups on the basis of a number of other criteria. These groups embody specific interests, which clash in everyday life. For instance the town-dweller who buys his food from the marketplace is satisfied when the market offers an abundance of inexpensive produce, whilst those who sell agricultural produce would like to see their goods fetch as high a price as possible. Trades and companies are competing with each other for technological development, for investment projects designed to provide healthier and more productive work. Administrative units (counties, towns, villages) are competing in a race for better provision for their community, above all for better housing.

To sum up, although Hungarian society as a whole, and every social class stratum and group has a vested interest in the continued undisturbed and fruitful building of socialism, since this is the source of livelihood for every group and individual, opinions differ greatly the ways in which this goal should be realized, the pace of development, and the priorities during this development. It is the most important task of Hungary's political leadership to allow the expression, confrontations and clash of the opinions and initiatives which mirror these differing interests.

Party and Mass Organizations, Democratic Forums of Public Life

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is itself a forum for expressing divergent interests. The membership of more than 800,000 is a reflection in miniature of the whole of Hungarian society. MSzMP membership rose steadily between the Eighth and Twelfth Congresses. (At the Eighth it was 512,000 at the Ninth, 585,000; at the Tenth, 662,000; at the Eleventh, 754,350 and at the Twelfth, 811,830.) The party's social stratification reflected the structural changes which have taken place during socialist development. As far as the structure of party membership is concerned, according to their original occupations 62.4 per cent of members are working class; according to their present occupations 43.5 per cent of members are workers, 8.1 per cent are peasants working in the co-operative farms, 41 per cent are professional workers and 7.4 per cent are in other occupations.

The party's manifesto says the following concerning internal party affairs, party democracy, discipline of action and responsibility for the implementation of decisions: "The party's internal life must be developed in a way which serves as an example of socialist public spirit, and of the communist self-government of the future."

Indicative, among other things, of the emergence of this process is the growth of the importance of elected bodies. There are some 240,000 elective offices, which means that large sections of the party membership take part in the life of the party and in the guidance of party work.

The Patriotic People's Front is an umbrella organization which rallies the broadest sections of Hungarian society into a cohesive movement. The Churches and the national minority federations are represented in it; its forums and activities provide ample scope for regional planning, the dissemination of knowledge with special emphasis on the homeland, and the nurturing of progressive national traditions. The Communist Youth Union (KISZ), the youth organization of the MSzMP, also represents the interests of young people. KISZ must be consulted when parliamentary bills and draft legislation affecting the living and working conditions of young people and their opportunities for education are deliberated.

Representing over three million wage and salary earners, the trade unions have far greater power than they had, say, fifteen years ago. The unions, which are based on the various trades and occupations, have the right to express an opinion on a number of important issues. At every level of the economic organization (company, ministry, government, the trade unions, the national union executives, and the Central Council of Trade Unions) their demands and proposals are from time to time put forward.

In addition to these social organizations concerned with the assertion and protection of interests, the local councils also serve as important institutions of socialist democracy. The councils are bodies of administration, self-government and popular representation at one and the same time which in the area under their authority control local industry, education and the provision of health care, and handle the day to day problems of citizens. They are officially responsible for

regional development and community services. They dispose of substantial financial resources, part of which they earn themselves, while the rest comes from state funds. The entire population has a say in the use of resources and the control of local politics—through their elected councillors.

Parliament, or as it is officially known, the Hungarian National Assembly, is the supreme state centre of socialist democracy. At present there is no multi-party system in Hungary. The electoral law passed in 1983 made it obligatory to nominate more than one candidate. This means that at least two candidates run for each constituency seat and the electors make their choice through the secret ballot. Yet, a great deal still needs to be done both as far as nominating members and the issues discussed at parliamentary sessions are concerned, in order that this institution is able to fulfil its true vocation.

Scholarship, Education, Culture

The socialist transformation which has taken place in Hungary has brought a qualitative change in the development of the general education of the Hungarian people. Statistics can only present and demonstrate the quantitative aspect of this process. They can record the growth in the number of books read in Hungary since the sixties, but can serve as no indication of the changes in readers' tastes and standards.

Between 1945 and 1962 immense efforts were made to eradicate the damaging heritage of the past. By the early sixties Hungary had caught up with European nations of medium development as far as public education was concerned.

In 1960, 65 per cent of active earners (i. e. the entire adult population with the exception of pensioners) had completed less than the minimum of eight years of primary education. By 1980 that figure had fallen to eighteen per cent. This means that with the exception of the older generation and a few underprivileged social groups, practically everybody in Hungary has completed primary school education.

Twenty years ago out of all working people only seven per cent possessed secondary school qualifications. In 1980 one in five workers held some form of secondary school certificate.

University graduates were still a rarity in 1960. Only three out of every hundred working people held higher educational qualifications. Today eight out of every hundred active earners hold university or college degrees. Change has been especially noticeable in the countryside, where, previously, almost no one apart from the priest, the teacher and the doctor held higher educational qualifications. Today teachers, health workers and the managerial staff of the large-scale agricultural units have swelled the ranks of "rural" graduates. The cultural demands of these professionals exert an influence over the entire aspect of the village.

Nevertheless the results are not satisfactory enough. It is an alarming factor that illiteracy is reproduced regularly on the peripheries of society, that even today there are people who can hardly read or write although they are few in number.

Moreover, it is a fact that there are enormous differences in standards between schools, which means that thousands of children will automatically be at a disadvantage just because of where they were born or what their family surroundings were.

While building boarding schools for children from the remote homesteads, the Hungarian state is at the same time allocating vast financial sums for the development of science. This century is the century of scientific and technical revolution. In the era of electronic computers, space flights, and the laser beam, a small country cannot afford to keep abreast with every field of science. However, in those areas where Hungary has traditionally been successful, she is high in the international league. Precisely because of reasons mentioned above, Hungary is able to utilize scientific co-operation between CMEA countries particularly well.

In 1980 research was carried on at 126 institutes and in about 1,340 research units, the staff involved numbered 85,000, of whom 38,000 were carrying out research requiring high skills. About half of these work in the technical sciences, 19 per cent in the social sciences, 14 per cent in the natural sciences, 9 per cent in medical science and 8 per cent in the agricultural sciences.

In the recent decades Hungarian scientists have given substantial assistance to the national economy. Their work has produced new products which are internationally competitive in the fields of pharmaceuticals, telecommunications and the chemical and engineering industries; without them Hungarian agriculture would not have been able to catch up with the world's leading agricultural producers. They also played an important role in solving complex economic problems, the shaping of social consciousness, and the development of medical care. Through their individual achievements many have earned a very favourable reputation for Hungary.

The majority of Hungarian scientists and scholars working in various spheres of cultural life are committed to Marxist-Leninist ideology and employ the creative methods of Marxism in their work. A precondition for this, however, was that Marxism had to be freed from the shackles of vulgarization which had been attached to it for years. This does not mean that Marxism is the single ideological current present in Hungarian cultural life. On the contrary, there are Marxists and non-Marxists among the creative artists in Hungary; the latter include a large section whose work is based on deeply-rooted religious ideology, as well as advocates of bourgeois and democratic peasant trends. This diversity of Hungarian culture is based on the acceptance of fundamental socialist values. Unfortunately the language barrier has so far proved to be a serious obstacle to popularizing major works of Hungarian culture abroad. Music, fine arts and in particular the cinema, which authentically mirrors the complexity of contemporary Hungarian reality, are the exception.

Today the Hungarian working class movement looks back on a very difficult but at the same time instructive century of struggle. Initially there were the cellar workshops, the twelve-hour working day, the day-to-day struggle to make ends meet. And then there was the struggle for social recognition, to draw the attention

of the establishment to the very existence of the working class and to procure a few basic political rights. Over a period of decades of struggle the Hungarian working class not only proved themselves worthy of these, but also acquired the maturity to exercise political power. They assumed the responsibilities of power at the most difficult moment of Hungary's history, under extremely unfavourable conditions.

During the past forty years, a period characterized by working class rule in Hungary, revolutionary changes affecting the whole of Hungarian society have taken place. During this historically brief period the everyday lives of Hungarian people have changed radically. Whereas being able to strave of hunger used formerly to serve as the yardstick for measuring the standard of living, in Hungary today every second working class family drives — in their own car — to their cottage and plot of land at the weekend. The working class is the largest and the socially decisive class in Hungary today. It is becoming increasingly difficult to define the working class as the distinction between them—in the traditional sense—the peasantry working on the big agricultural complexes and the intelligentsia is rapidly fading; this is a process which often takes place within the family. The schooling and education of the Hungarian worker has reached the level which was once the privilege of the middle class; and the quality of life of the Hungarian people stands up to European comparison.

Citizens of contemporary Hungary are fully aware that despite the extraordinary achievements of the past few decades, the solution of every problem immediately gives rise to another. In the course of their difficult struggles they have learned to face their problems soberly and without prejudging them. They know that history does not provide ready-made answers; each historical turning-point demands a unique, unrepeatable solution. Precisely for this reason they are receptive to the experiences of other countries and strive to adopt whatever is compatible with the particular Hungarian conditions.

Hungary is, in point of fact, forced to do this. Located in the heart of Europe, her economy is tied by innumerable links to other economies; she cannot, indeed she does not wish to isolate herself. Openness of this type has both advantages and disadvantages. Development is not determined exclusively by internal factors, but also by external forces such as, for instance, the energy and raw material price explosion of the seventies, which hit countries with limited energy resources like Hungary very hard. In her efforts to overcome the difficulties Hungary received great help from the community of socialist countries.

History has shown that Hungary made the right choice when she embarked on the road of socialist development. Although that road has been a long and difficult one, this course of development was the one best suited to Hungary's characteristic historical, economic and political make-up. Hungary had to make this journey in order to be able, within a historically brief period, to join the ranks of the modern European nations.

Chronology

18 February 1867

Compromise (*Ausgleich*) between Austria and Hungary. Hungary achieves comparative independence within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A Hungarian government is formed.

9 February 1868

The first socialist organization, the General Workers' Society is established in Hungary.

22 August 1869

The first workers' rally in Budapest calls for the forming of the Social Democratic Party. The Minister of Home Affairs withholds permission to form the party.

3 April 1870

The General Workers' Sickness and Disability Fund is set up.

11 June 1871

The workers of Pest-Buda stage a demonstration in solidarity with the Paris Commune.

12-21 June. Twenty-eight leaders of the General Workers' Society are arrested and proceedings are instituted against them.

5 January 1873

The first appearance in Hungarian and German of the *Munkás Heti Krónika* (Arbeiter Wochen-Kronik [Workers' Weekly Chronicle]), paper of the socialists.

October 1876

Leó Frankel becomes one of the leaders of the Hungarian working class movement.

1 January 1880

The Hungarian Social Democratic Party is formed. Its central newspapers are: *Népszava* in Hungarian, and the German-language paper *Arbeiter Wochen-Kronik*. The Minister of Home Affairs, however, refuses to endorse the use of the words "social democratic" in the name of the party. Accordingly, from 17 May onwards the party functions under the new name of the "Hungarian General Workers' Party".

8 June 1881

Leó Frankel is arrested and sentenced to one and a half years in a special state prison for political prisoners.

June 1883

Leó Frankel leaves Hungary.

14-20 July 1889

Hungarian General Workers' Party is represented by three delegates at the Founding Congress of the Second International.

1 May 1890

Sixty thousand workers celebrate May Day in Budapest. Parades are staged in a number of provincial towns as well.

7-8 December. The First Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (MSZDP).

May-June 1891

Clash between gendarmes and social democratic agricultural labourers at Orosháza, Békéscsaba and several settlements on the Great Plain.

22 June 1894

Clash between agricultural workers and gendarmerie at Hódmezővásárhely. The gendarmes fire into the crowd, killing one demonstrator.

May 1896

Celebrations marking the one thousandth anniversary of Hungarian statehood.

June-July 1897

Harvesters' strikes on the Great Plain and in Transdanubia.

January-February 1898

Movements to occupy the land and uprisings in Szabolcs Country.

21-22 May 1899

The First Congress of Hungarian trade unions.

12-14 April 1903

The Tenth Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party accepts the party's programme.

1 April 1905

Népszava becomes a daily newspaper.

15 September. The workers of Budapest stage a political strike for universal suffrage.

7 January 1906

The National Federation of Agricultural Workers is formed.

8 November. Launching of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party's theoretical journal, *Szocializmus*.

22 November 1908

The Galilei Circle is formed.

23 May 1912

Over one hundred thousand people demand universal suffrage at a demonstration staged in Budapest by the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. Clashes between demonstrators and police result in four dead and 158 injured.

28 June 1914

Assassination of Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne in Sarajevo.

28 July. The Austro-Hungarian Empire declares war on Serbia.

5 August. The Empire declares war on Russia and then on Britain and France.

24 May 1915

Italy declares war on the Empire.

27 August 1916

Rumania declares war on the Central Powers.

21 November. Death of Francis Joseph, who is followed on the throne by Charles IV.

6 April 1917

The United States enters the war against the Central Powers.

8-9 April. Conference of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party welcomes the Russian Revolution.

25 November. Demonstration in Budapest to express solidarity with the Russian Revolution.

3 December. Negotiations on an armistice begin at Brest-Litovsk.

18-21 January 1918

General strike in Budapest against the Brest-Litovsk diktat. The strike spreads to the countryside.

1-3 February. Sailors' mutiny at Cattaro.

24 March. Formation of the Hungarian section of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Russia in Moscow.

17-28 June. Gendarmes fire on striking workers of the Hungarian State Railway Company Engineering Works. In response, several hundred thousand workers retaliate by staging strikes in Budapest and the provinces.

8 October. Proclamation of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party on the right of the German minority living in Hungary to self-determination and democratic transformation. Formation of the Hungarian National Council.

28 October. The Prague National Council proclaims the establishment of the Czechoslovak state.

30-31 October. Groups of armed workers and soldiers occupy Budapest's strategic points. The victory of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Mihály Károlyi's coalition government is formed.

3 November. The Austro-Hungarian Empire concludes an armistice agreement with the Entente Powers in Padua.

16 November. Hungary is proclaimed a republic.

24 November. The Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP) is formed.

1 December. A meeting at Gyulafehérvár (now Alba Iulia, Rumania) of Transylvanian Rumanians declares union with Rumania.

7 December. The first edition of *Vörös Újság* (Red Newspaper), the daily of the KMP appears.

11 January 1919

Mihály Károlyi is elected president of the Hungarian Republic.

- 18 January.** The opening of the Paris Peace Conference.
- 21 February.** Leaders of the KMP are arrested.
- 23 February.** Mihály Károlyi launches the land distribution campaign by ceremonial distribution of his own estate.
- 20 March.** Lieutenant-Colonel Vix hands over the Entente's Memorandum to the Hungarian government.
- 21 March.** The merger of the KMP and the MSzDP. The Budapest Workers' Council passes a resolution on the takeover of power.
The proclamation of the Hungarian Republic of Councils.
- 22 March.** The forming of the Revolutionary Governing Council.
- 6-7 April.** Council elections.
- 16 April.** The Rumanian army launches an offensive against the Hungarian Republic of Councils.
- 23 April.** Start of the offensive of the Czechoslovak army against the Republic of Councils.
- 30 April.** Rumanian troops reach the River Tisza.
- 2 May.** The workers of Budapest decide on continued resistance. The mobilization of the workers starts.
- 30 May to 12 June.** The counter-offensive of the Red Army on the Northern front. Eastern Slovakia is liberated, as is the major part of Central Slovakia.
- 7 June.** In a memorandum Clemenceau demands the immediate cessation of hostilities against Czechoslovakia and the evacuation of the liberated areas.
- 12-13 June.** Congress of the new, united workers' party.
- 14-23 June.** The National Assembly of Councils adopts a Constitution.
- 26 June.** The Slovak Republic of Councils is proclaimed in Eperjes (now Prešov, Czechoslovakia).
- 24 June.** Counter-revolutionary uprising in Budapest.
- 1 August.** The Revolutionary Governing Council resigns under pressure from superior enemy forces.
A trade union government is formed with Gyula Peidl as Prime Minister.
- 4 August.** The Rumanian army enters Budapest.
- 7 August.** Counter-revolutionary detachments force the Peidl government to resign. István Friedrich forms a new government.
- 9 August.** Miklós Horthy sets up the supreme command of the counter-revolutionary "National Army".
- 25-26 January 1920.**
Elections in Hungary. The Social Democratic Party boycotts the elections owing to the white terror which is sweeping the country.
- 17 February.** Horthy's officers murder Béla Somogyi, editor-in-chief of *Népszava*.
- 1 March.** Miklós Horthy is elected Regent of Hungary.
- 4 June.** Signing of the Treaty of Trianon.

14 April 1921.

István Bethlen forms a new government. A period of consolidation begins for the counter-revolution.

28 July. An agreement is signed in Riga by the Soviet and Hungarian governments on the exchange of prisoners. Under the agreement the Hungarian government is to hand over to the Soviet government those who were sentenced to imprisonment for revolutionary activity. In exchange, the Soviet Union is to release prominent Hungarian officers captured by Russia during the war.

20-24 October. Charles IV attempts to retake the throne, but is frustrated by Horthy and his supporters.

21 December. The government and the Social Democratic Party conclude an agreement (the Bethlen-Peyer Pact).

2 May to 1 June 1922

Parliamentary elections. For the first time in its history the MSzDP takes part in an election and wins 25 seats.

18 September. Hungary is admitted to the League of Nations.

1 July 1924

Post-war inflation is terminated by a League of Nations loan.

14 April 1925

The Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary (MSzMP) is formed.

18-21 August. The illegal KMP holds its First Congress in Vienna.

8-10 December 1926

Parliamentary elections. The MSzDP loses votes, but retains 14 seats.

1 January 1927

The first issue of *Kommunista* (Communist), an illegal paper of the KMP —produced in Hungary.

27 February to 15 March 1930

The Second Congress of the KMP in Aprelevka, the Soviet Union.

1 September. A huge demonstration in Budapest and provincial towns against unemployment. One person is killed and hundreds injured.

13 October. The Independent Smallholders' Party is formed.

28-30 June. Parliamentary elections. The MSzDP wins only 11 seats.

29 September. Using the Biatorbágy railway incident as a pretext, the government introduce martial law.

7 April 1932

A nation-wide demonstration against the harassment of the MSzDP in which two are killed and dozens injured.

29 July. On the basis of the martial law decree Imre Sallai and Sándor Fürst, two leaders of the KMP, are sentenced to death and executed.

17-19 June 1933

The Hungarian Premier, Gyula Gömbös, pays a visit to Hitler.

31 March to 7 April 1935

Parliamentary elections. The MSzDP retains its earlier position.

7-8 March 1936

The Comintern dissolves the Central Committee of the KMP. In the wake of the resolution to this effect the party organizations in Hungary temporarily suspend their operation.

17 October 1937

The extreme right-wing Hungarian National Socialist Party (also called Arrow Cross Party) is formed under the leadership of Ferenc Szálasi.

30 April 1938

Parliament adopts an armament programme.

29 May. Legislation is enacted to exclude Jews from certain occupation (First Law on Jews).

2 November. The First Vienna Decision. The Hungarian army marches into southern Slovakia.

24 February 1939

Hungary joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

15 March. The Hungarian army begins the occupation of Sub-Carpathia.

11 April. Hungary leaves the League of Nations.

5 May. The Second Law on Jews imposes further restrictions on the rights of the Jewish population.

28-29 May. Parliamentary elections. Szálasi's party (the Arrow Cross Party) forges ahead. The Social Democratic Party loses votes and half its MPs.

30 August 1940

The Second Vienna Decision. Hungarian troops march into northern Transylvania.

20 November. Hungary joins the three-power pact.

3 April 1941

Prime Minister Pál Teleki commits suicide.

7 April. Britain breaks off diplomatic relations with Hungary.

11 April. Hungary joins the German offensive against Yugoslavia. Hungarian troops march into the Bácska area.

27 June. Hungary joins the German offensive against the Soviet Union.

6 October. The first anti-fascist demonstration in Budapest.

6 December. A state of war is declared between Britain and Hungary.

12 December. Hungary declares war on the United States.

4-30 January 1942

Hungarian occupation troops murder several thousand people in the areas formerly belonging to Yugoslavia.

9 March. Miklós Kállay forms a new government.

15 March. Big anti-fascist demonstration in Budapest.

May-June. A wave of arrests hits the illegal Communist Party; some 500 people are rounded up, among them three members of the Central Committee.

13 June. Ferenc Rózsa, a KMP leader, is killed during police interrogation.

9 October. Zoltán Schönherz, secretary of the KMP, is executed.

12 January to 9 February 1943

The Second Hungarian Army is annihilated at River Don.

July. The KMP changes its name to Peace Party.

19 March 1944

German troops occupy Hungary.

29 March. Every left-wing political party and organization—including the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders' Party—is banned. Anti-Hitler politicians are arrested and deported to concentration camps in Germany.

3 April. The first air-raids hit Hungary.

15 May to 27 June. Some 600,000 Jews are deported from Hungarian territory to death camps.

23 September. Continued Red Army operations reach Hungarian soil.

28 September. Miklós Horthy despatches an armistice delegation to Moscow.

15 October. Horthy announces in a radio address that he is seeking an armistice with the Soviet Union. With German assistance, Ferenc Szálasi stages a political take-over. The period of Arrow Cross terror begins.

8 December. The military leaders of the anti-German resistance movement, János Kiss, Jenő Nagy and Vilmos Tartsay, are executed in Budapest.

21–22 December. The Provisional National Government is formed in Debrecen.

24 December. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky is executed.

28 December. The Hungarian Provisional National Government declares war on Germany.

13 February 1945

The liberation of Budapest

18 March. The Provisional Government issues the Decree on Land Reform.

4 April. The liberation of the whole of Hungary is completed.

1 May. Several hundred thousand people stage a procession in Budapest in the name of the workers' unity.

4 November. Parliamentary elections.

6 December. The nationalization of the coal mines.

1 February 1946

The proclamation of the Hungarian Republic. Zoltán Tildy becomes President of the Republic.

7 February to 1 March. The trial of Ferenc Szálasi and his associates. All are sentenced to death and executed.

5 March. The formation of the Left-Wing Bloc.

7 March. In Budapest 400,000 people demonstrate their solidarity with the Left-Wing Bloc.

June–July. Rocketing inflation of unprecedented magnitude and proportion hits Hungary.

1 August. The introduction of the new currency, the *forint*.

29 September to 1 October. The Third Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party.

10 February 1947

Hungarian Peace Treaty is signed in Paris.

24 May. Agreement is reached over implementing the exchange of population between Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

30 May. Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, in Switzerland on a visit, announces his resignation. Lajos Dinnyés forms a new government.

4 June. Prisoners of war start to return from the Soviet Union.

1 July. Three-year plan for the reconstruction of the country becomes law.

10 July. The Hungarian government rejects the Marshall Plan.

31 August. Parliamentary elections.

30 September. The MKP joins the Cominform.

24 November. Nationalization of the banks.

28 November. Decree on nationalization of the bauxite and aluminium industry.

18 February 1948

The Soviet Union and Hungary sign a treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance.

6–8 March. The 36th Congress of the Social Democratic Party decides to support the Hungarian Communist Party.

15 March. Celebrations to mark the centenary of the 1948 Revolution.

25 March. Factories with over one hundred employees are nationalized.

12 June. Merger of the Hungarian Communist and Social Democratic Parties. The Hungarian Working People's Party is formed.

16 June. Legislation on nationalization of church schools.

27 June. Cominform resolution on the Yugoslav Communist Party.

30 July. Zoltán Tildy resigns as President of the Republic. He is succeeded by Árpád Szakasits.

20 August. In a speech Mátyás Rákosi announces that the party's goal is the socialist reorganization of agriculture.

8 September. Decree on setting up the State Security Authority (ÁVH).

5–8 January 1949

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is formed. Hungary is a founding member.

8 February. József Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom, is sentenced to life imprisonment.

15 May. Parliamentary elections.

30 May. László Rajk and his associates are arrested on trumped-up charges.

14–28 August. The World Youth Festival is staged in Budapest.

1 September. Bread rationing is ended.

24 September. László Rajk, Tibor Szőnyi and András Szalai are sentenced to death.

30 September. The Hungarian government abrogates the Treaty of Friendship with Yugoslavia.

21 October. György Pálffy and three others are sentenced to death on trumped-up charges.

28 December. Nationalization of factories in foreign ownership.

1 January 1950

The first five-year plan is launched.

25 April. Árpád Szakasits, President of the Hungarian Republic, and several other former social democrat leaders are arrested on trumped-up charges.

18 May. Legislation is enacted on the reorganizing of public administration and the setting up of local councils.

17 June. A united youth organization, the Federation of Working Youth is formed.

30 August. Agreement between the Government and the Catholic Church.

25 February to 2 March 1951

The Second Congress of the MDP.

16 April. Because of disruption in supplies, bread and meat rationing is reintroduced.

17 April. A government decree lays down that permission must first be applied for before anyone can settle in Budapest.

20-30 April. The First Congress of Hungarian writers.

12 May. János Kádár, Gyula Kállai and other former leaders of the illegal Communist Party are arrested on trumped-up charges.

15 May. Parliament modifies the law on the five-year plan, substantially increasing plan targets.

June. Deportations from Budapest of members of the former ruling class, for the most part, who are resettled in small villages in the Trans-Tisza region.

1 December. Rationing is discontinued. Substantial price increases are implemented which are only partially compensated for by a small rise in wages.

18 February 1952

Nationalization of blocks of flats.

14 August. Parliament elects István Dobi as President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic. Mátyás Rákosi becomes Prime Minister.

20 January 1953

Hungary completes reparations to the Soviet Union, as prescribed by the Peace Treaty.

17 May. Parliamentary elections.

27-28 June. A meeting of the MDP Central Leadership criticizes the party's activity.

2 July. Mátyás Rákosi resigns as Prime Minister, but remains First Secretary of the MDP. Imre Nagy becomes the new Prime Minister.

25 July. An amnesty is decreed. The institution of internment is abolished. Those forced to leave Budapest are allowed to return.

23 August. Income tax paid by the peasantry is reduced, as are compulsory deliveries.

25 September. Peasants are allowed to leave co-operative farms.

13 March 1954

Gábor Péter, former head of the State Security Authority, is sentenced to life imprisonment.

24–30 May. The Third Congress of the MDP.

2–4 March 1955

A meeting of the MDP Central Leadership denounces Imre Nagy's views.

18–22 April. Parliament relieves Imre Nagy of his post as Prime Minister. His successor is András Hegedüs.

11–14 May. The European socialist countries sign a treaty in Warsaw on the setting up of a joint military command. Hungary becomes a member of the Warsaw Treaty.

7–8 June. A meeting of the MDP Central Leadership hears a report on the rehabilitation of those sentenced illegally since 1949. The improvement of relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia is also dealt with.

14 December. Hungary is admitted to the United Nations.

12–13 March 1956

At a meeting of the MDP Central Leadership Mátyás Rákosi gives an account of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

17 March. The Petőfi Circle of the Federation of Working Youth stages its first social event.

17 April. Cominform ceases to operate.

8 May. The Council of Ministers adopts a resolution on dismantling frontier defence installations on Hungary's western border.

18–21 July. A meeting of the MDP Central Leadership relieves Mátyás Rákosi of his duties as First Secretary. He is succeeded by Ernő Gerő.

1 August. The strength of the army is reduced by another 15,000.

17 September. The General Assembly of the Federation of Hungarian Writers demands that Imre Nagy be appointed Prime Minister.

6 October. A huge crowd attends the ceremonial burial of the victims of the cult of personality—László Rajk, Tibor Szőnyi and others. A demonstration takes place after the ceremony.

15–22 October. Headed by Ernő Gerő, a party delegation goes to Belgrade to hold talks with the representatives of the Yugoslav Communists' League.

16–20 October. Student rallies at several universities. Various organizations are formed under various names.

22 October. Budapest Technical University announces the slogan for the demonstration which is to take place the following day.

23 October. A big demonstration in Budapest. Armed groups appear among

the demonstrators. In the evening hours armed groups attack the radio station, the telephone exchange, barracks and public buildings.

The government requests the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary for help in restoring law and order.

24 October. The Presidential Council appoints Imre Nagy as Prime Minister. Fighting continues in Budapest and several provincial towns.

25 October. The MDP Central Leadership relieves Ernő Gerő of his post as First Secretary. His successor is János Kádár.

Fighting continues. "Workers' Committees" are formed in various parts of the country.

28 October. Soviet troops leave Budapest.

30 October. Armed counter-revolutionaries occupy the headquarters of the Budapest Party Committee and stage a massacre.

Imre Nagy announces the restoration of the multi-party system.

József Mindszenty arrives in Budapest.

1 November. Imre Nagy announces that Hungary is to leave the Warsaw Treaty.

In a radio address János Kádár announces the dissolution of the MDP and the formation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

3 November. József Mindszenty declares in a radio address that he does not recognize the Imre Nagy government.

4 November. János Kádár forms the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. With military help from the Soviet Union the liquidation of the counter-revolution is begun.

14 November. The Greater Budapest Workers' Council is formed.

18 January 1957

The Ministry of Home Affairs suspends the operations of the Writers' Federation.

28 February. The Workers' Militia is formed.

21 March. The Communist Youth Union (KISz) is formed.

13 April. The lifting of night curfew.

1 May. Hundreds of thousands of people attend a mass rally in Budapest. János Kádár speaks to the crowd.

27 May. A Hungarian-Soviet agreement is signed on the legal status of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary.

27-29 June. National Conference of the MSzMP.

1 January 1958

Legislation is enacted to allow members of co-operative farms to a retirement pension.

29 January. Government reshuffle: Ferenc Münnich becomes Prime Minister.

17 June. Imre Nagy and his associates are sentenced to death and executed.

16 November. Parliamentary and local council elections.

5-7 December. An MSzMP CC resolution on the further development of the co-operative farm movement.

3 April 1959

The Presidential Council issues a partial amnesty decree.

2 June. Setting up of the State Office for Church Affairs.

30 November to 5 December. The Seventh Congress of the MSzMP.

19 December. An agreement is signed in Moscow on the construction of an oil pipeline from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

10 January 1960

Government resolution on a fifteen-year housing plan, which sets a target of one million new homes.

1 September. Visa-free travel is introduced between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Similar agreements are concluded with all other European socialist countries with the exception of the Soviet Union.

5 January 1961

Eighty-two per cent of the country's arable land is now under cultivation by socialist agricultural complexes.

12 September. A meeting of the MSzMP Central Committee adopts a resolution on the directives for the Second Five-Year Plan.

13 September. Government reshuffle. János Kádár becomes Prime Minister.

15-16 December. Parliament introduces a new Penal Code.

29 April 1962

The Soviet-Hungarian electric transmission line and oil pipeline are completed.

18 May. The General Assembly of the Hungarian Writers' Federation.

14-16 August. An MSzMP CC resolution on the unlawful trials which were staged during the period of the cult of the personality.

20-24 November. The Eighth Congress of the MSzMP.

24 February 1963

Parliamentary and local council elections.

2 March. Presidential Council decree on a general amnesty.

25 June 1965

Government reshuffles. Gyula Kállai becomes Prime Minister.

18-20 November. A meeting of the MSzMP CC passes a resolution on the reappraisal of the system of economic management.

28 November to 3 December 1966. The Ninth Congress of the MSzMP.

19 March 1967

Parliamentary and local council elections.

14 April. A new government is formed with Jenő Fock as Prime Minister.

20 April. The first "For the Socialist Homeland" awards are made to those who took an active part in the working class movement before the liberation.

7 September. A new treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance is signed by Hungary and the Soviet Union.

1 January 1968

Introduction of the economic reform.

26 February to 5 March. The meeting in Budapest of communist and workers' parties of 65 countries.

21 August. The army units of five socialist countries, including Hungary, enter Czechoslovakia.

23 January 1969

The duration of child care allowance is extended to three years.

1 January 1970

A census is held. The population of Hungary is 10,314,152.

2 April. The first section of the Budapest underground railway is opened.

28-30 September. Meeting of 45 communist and workers' parties in Budapest.

23-28 November. The Tenth Congress of the MSzMP.

25 April 1971

Parliamentary and local council elections.

28 September. Cardinal József Mindszenty leaves Hungary.

20 April. Parliament amends the Constitution.

28 November 1973

A meeting of the MSzMP CC assesses the experiences of the economic reform.

17-22 March 1975

The Eleventh Congress of the MSzMP.

11 April. New Social Security Act. Free medical provision becomes the constitutional right of every Hungarian citizen.

15 May. Government reshuffles. György Lázár becomes the new Prime Minister.

15 June. Parliamentary elections.

1 June 1978

Visa-free travel is introduced between Hungary and Austria.

26 October. Legislation is introduced to make travel easier for Hungarian citizens.

20 January 1979

The energy supply networks of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria are linked up by a 750 kilovolt transmission line.

2-15 January 1980

A census is held. Hungary's population is 10,710,000.

24-27 March. The Twelfth Congress of the MSzMP.

List and Abbreviations of Political Parties

Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSzDP) – *Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt*

Hungarian Party of Communist (KMP) – *Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja*

Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) – *Független Kisgazdapárt*

Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary (MSzMP) – *Magyarországi Szocialista Munkáspárt*

National Peasant Party (NPP) – *Nemzeti Parasztpárt*

Hungarian Communist Party (MKP) – *Magyar Kommunista Párt*

Hungarian Working People's Party (MDP) – *Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*

Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP) – *Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*

Bourgeois Democratic Party (PDP) – *Polgári Demokrata Párt*

National Federation of Young Workers (IOSZ) – *Ifjűmunkások Országos Szövetsége*

Federation of Young Communist Workers (KIMSz) – *Kommunista Ifjűmunkás Szövetség*

Hungarian Communist Youth Union (KISz) – *Magyar Kommunista Ifjűsági Szövetség*

National Youth Committee (OIB) – *Országos Ifjűsági Bizottság*

Index of Names

- Endre Ady (1877–1919):** progressive Hungarian poet.
- Péter Ágoston (1874–1925):** lawyer. Became a member of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1893. A deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs under the Republic of Council.
- György Alexits (1899–1978):** mathematician, an active participant in the revolutions of 1918 and 1919.
- Gyula Alpári (1882–1944):** journalist. Expelled from the Hungarian Social Democratic Party for oppositionist activity in 1910. Became member of the KMP in 1919. Served as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs under the Republic of Councils. In 1921 the Third Congress of the Communist International appointed him editor of the CI bulletin (*Internazionale Presse Korrespondenz*). Arrested in summer 1940 by the Gestapo in France. Executed in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.
- János Antal (1907–43):** journalist. Member of the KMP from 1929, worked as a political writer for the underground communist press in Hungary.
- István Antos (1908–60):** economist. Joined the MKP in 1945 and became an Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Finance. In 1954 he became a professor and department head at the University of Economics. From 1957 he served as Minister of Finance. Became a member of the MSzMP CC in 1959.
- Antal Apró (1913–):** construction worker, politician. Became a member of the KMP in 1931. One of the organizers of the construction workers' strike in 1935. Took part in organizing armed anti-fascist resistance in 1944. A member of the MKP Central Committee from 1945, when he also became Secretary General of the Central Council of Hungarian Trade Unions. Acted as Deputy Prime Minister between 1957 and 1971. Became Speaker of Parliament in 1971.
- Lipót Aschner (1872–1952):** businessman, director-general of the Tungsram factory from 1921 onwards, vice-president of the National Federation of Industrialists.
- Mihály Babits (1883–1941):** poet, writer and, for a long time, editor-in-chief of *Nyugat* (West), a progressive literary journal.
- Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky (1886–1944):** political writer and politician. A university graduate in law. Served as a hussar officer in the First World War and took part in counter-revolutionary organizations from 1919 onwards. Became an MP in 1922 as member of an extreme right-wing political party. During the early thirties his political views changed: he became an active participant in

the struggle against fascism. Joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1936 and then became an MP for that party. During the Second World War he endeavoured to turn Hungary against Hitler. In 1944 he was arrested by the Gestapo and was then sentenced to death and executed.

Béla Balázs (1884–1949): writer, aesthetician. A high-ranking official in the People's Commissariat for Public Education in 1919. He emigrated first to Austria and then to Germany in 1919. A professor at the Moscow Film Academy between 1931–45; head of the Institute of Film Studies in Budapest between 1945–9.

György Bálint (1906–43): political journalist, writer and critic. Became an advocate of socialist ideas in the mid-thirties, and contributed regularly to socialist and communist journals. Arrested in 1942: sent to the front as the member of a forced labour unit camp and never returned.

István Balogh (1894–1976): Roman Catholic priest. Member of the Independent Smallholders' Party and served as Under-Secretary of State in 1944. A leader of the FKGP between 1945–7; an opposition politician in 1947–9. Retired from active political life in 1950 and worked as a priest.

Antal Bán (1903–51): ironworker. Joined the social democratic movement in 1918. Lived in Yugoslavia between 1919–41 and played an active part in the social democratic organizations of the Hungarian minority living in Yugoslavia. Worked in the MSzDP's Budapest headquarters from 1942 onwards. In 1945 he became a member of the MSzDP leadership, and served as deputy secretary general. Expelled from the party in March 1948 for his opposition to the merger between the SzDP and the MKP. Left Hungary and participated in the international social democratic movement until his death.

István Barankovics (1906–74): a journalist of Catholic persuasions, politician. An MP after 1945. In 1947 he became the chairman of the opposition Democratic Party, a party with a Christian democrat programme. Emigrated in 1949 and spent the rest of his life in the United States.

László Bárdossy (1890–1946): politician. Foreign Minister in 1941; later became Prime Minister. It was under his premiership that Hungary entered the Second World War as the ally of Nazi Germany. Sentenced to death and executed as a war criminal in 1946.

Sándor Barta (1897–1938): writer.

Béla Bartók (1881–1945): composer.

Count Tivadar Batthyány (1859–1931): politician. An MP from 1892 onwards, he served as a minister under the 1918 bourgeois revolution.

Ervin Bauer (1890–42): physician, biologist.

Marcell Benedek (1885–1969): literary historian, translator.

László Benjámin (1915–86): poet.

Oszkár Beregi (1876–1965): actor.

Aurél Bernáth (1895–1982): painter.

István Bethlen (1874–1947): politician. A university graduate in law, he became an MP in 1901. A leader of the forces of counter-revolution organizing against

the Republic of Councils in Vienna in 1919. Served as Prime Minister in 1921–31, a decade which witnessed the consolidation of the counter-revolutionary regime. Continued to exert great influence on Hungary's political life even after his resignation. He acted the part of *éminence grise* to Horthy. A leader of the anti-Hitler conservative faction of Anglo-Saxon leanings which attempted to salvage the Horthy regime for the post-war era in 1943–4. He played a part in various attempts to conclude a separate peace. He died in the Soviet Union.

István Biermann (1891–1937): bank clerk. A founding member of the KMP in 1918. Served in various posts under the Republic of Councils, for which he was sentenced to imprisonment. Under an agreement on the exchange of prisoners he was sent to the Soviet Union where he filled important economic posts until his death. Member of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party.

Miklós Biksza (1924–56): party activist. Murdered by counter-revolutionaries in 1956.

Béla Biszku (1921–): tool mechanic, politician. Joined the working class movement in 1938. Took an active part in armed anti-fascist resistance from 1944 onwards; party activist in 1946. Served as Minister of Home Affairs between 1957–61; Deputy Prime Minister in 1961–2. A secretary of the MSzMP CC in 1962–78. Member of the Political Committee of the MSzMP CC in 1956–80. Member of Parliament.

Ignác Bognár (1876–1933): printer. Became a social democrat in 1900. Acted as a leading official under the Republic of Councils, for which he was arrested. Sent to the Soviet Union under a prisoner exchange agreement, where he worked as the manager of a printing house until his death.

József Bognár (1917–): economist. Joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1943. Mayor of Budapest in 1947, minister in 1949–56. A university professor, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, director of the Research Institute for World Economics. Member of numerous learned international organizations. Member of Parliament.

Dezső Bokányi (1871–1940): stone-cutter, politician. Became a trade union member in 1886 and a full-time social democratic official in 1891. Member of the MSzDP leadership in 1894–1919. Translated a number of works by Marx, Engels and Bebel into Hungarian. Became member of the Revolutionary Governing Council in 1919, and a leading official of the Republic of Councils. For these activities he was sentenced to death. Sent to the Soviet Union under a prisoner exchange agreement, where he worked for International Red Aid. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938; died in prison.

Éva Bornemissza (1919–71): actress.

Olexa Borkanyuk (1901–42): agricultural labourer. Joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1922, became a full-time party activist in 1929. Emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1939. Returned illegally to Sub-Carpathia—then

part of Hungary—in 1942 where he organized partisan activity. Caught by Hungarian gendarmes, sentenced to death by a military court.

László F. Boross (1895–1938): journalist. Director of propaganda for young workers under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement. Worked for the press department of the Communist International. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938. A victim of the violations of legality.

Sándor Bortnyik (1892–1976): painter.

Vilmos Böhm (1880–1949): technician, politician. As a young worker he made contact with the Social Democratic Party, of which he became a leader in 1913. After the victory of the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution he served as Minister of Defence. Member of the Revolutionary Governing Council under the Republic of Councils, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, commander in chief of the Red Army. Moved to Austria after the fall of the Republic of Councils where he founded and led the *Világosság* (Light) group of social democratic *émigrés*. Played an important role in the work of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Was forced to leave Austria after the suppression of the 1934 Schutzbund uprising. Settled in Sweden. Returned to Hungary at the end of 1945 and joined the work of the Social Democratic Party. Appointed the Hungarian Republic's ambassador in Stockholm in 1946. Resigned his post in 1948 and did not return to Hungary. Died in Stockholm.

Éva Braun (1919–45): office worker. Joined the social democratic youth movement in 1936, member of the KMP from 1940. Participated in armed anti-fascist resistance under the German occupation of Hungary. Arrested and executed in January 1945.

Soma Braun (1890–1942): teacher, political writer, translator. Worked as educational commissar under the Republic of Councils, for which he was sentenced to five years imprisonment. Headed the educational activity of the Social Democratic Party after his release. Taken to the front with a punishment battalion in 1942 where he was shot dead.

Ernő Bresztovszky (1882–1922): journalist. Became a social democrat in 1904, and worked on the staff *Népszava* (People's Voice). Was deeply involved in literary policy. Lived in Switzerland from 1917 until the time of his death, where he worked as *Népszava*'s correspondent.

Manó Buchinger (1874–1953): bookbinder, politician. Joined the trade union movement as a young man. Became secretary of the Trade Union Council Executive Committee in 1899. Member of the MSzDP leadership from 1904 onwards, secretary from 1905. Did not join the united party in 1919, upon the proclamation of the Republic of Councils. Emigrated to Vienna and returned in 1929. Once again, he became member of the MSzDP leadership. Deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1944. Became an advocate of workers' unity after his return to Hungary. MP from 1945 until the time of his death, joined the MDP in 1948.

- József Büchler (1886–1958):** typesetter, politician. Joined the MSzDP in 1906, became a secretary in 1918. Filled the same post in the united party under the Republic of Councils. MP between 1931–5, national secretary general of the MSzDP between 1936–9. Tried on trumped-up charges in 1950. Rehabilitated in 1955.
- Ede Chlepkó (1883–1939):** iron turner. Joined the Ironworkers' Union in 1906. A founding member of the KMP in 1918. Emigrated in 1919. Worked in the Soviet Union from 1925 onwards. Tried under trumped-up charges. Died in prison.
- Ernő Czóbel (1886–1953):** teacher. Joined the MSzDP in 1903. Ambassador of the Republic of Councils in Vienna in 1919. Imprisoned after the fall of the Republic of Councils. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement, where he worked in the Marx–Engels Institute. Returned to Hungary in 1946. Pursued scholarly activity until the time of his death.
- Béla Dálnoki Miklós (1890–1948):** career army officer. Colonel-general, commander of the First Hungarian Army in 1944. Went over, together with his general staff, to the Soviet Army in October 1944.
President of the Provisional Government formed in December 1944.
- Lajos Dálnoki Veress (1889–1976):** career army officer. Colonel-general during the Second World War. Tried on charges of anti-state conspiracy in 1947. Left Hungary in 1956 and lived in London for the rest of his life.
- József Darvas (1912–73):** writer. Joined the working class movement in 1932. A leader of the National Peasant Party between 1939 and 1949. Later became a minister, president of the Hungarian Writers' Federation, MP.
- Tibor Déry (1894–1977):** writer. Member of the Writers' Directory under the Republic of Councils. Lived abroad for a long period and returned to Hungary in the mid-thirties. Joined the MKP in 1945 and became member of the Executive of the Writers' Federation. Arrested on charges of anti-state conspiracy in 1957 and sentenced to nine years imprisonment. Amnestied in 1961. A leading figure of the Hungarian literary scene for the rest of his life.
- Lajos Dinnyés (1901–1961):** politician. Joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1931 and became an MP. Served as Minister of Defence from 1947 and as Prime Minister in 1947–8. Later became the director of the National Agricultural Documentation Centre.
- István Dobi (1893–1968):** agricultural worker, politician. Joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1936. Active participant in the anti-fascist resistance movement from 1943. President of the FKGP in 1947. Served as Prime Minister in 1949–52. President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic between 1952–67.
- Ernő Dohnányi (1877–1960):** pianist and composer.
- Antal Dovcsák (1879–1962):** iron turner. Became President of the Ironworkers' Union in 1911. Served as Vice-President of the Revolutionary Governing Council under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to life imprisonment

from which he was released under the prisoner exchange agreement concluded with the Soviet Union. Settled in Austria in 1924 where he worked—with short breaks—for the rest of his life.

Tibor Eckhardt (1888–1972): lawyer, politician. Became an under-secretary of the Szeged counter-revolutionary government in 1919. An extreme conservative MP during the twenties. Joined the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1930 and became one of their MPs. Sent to the United States by Horthy in 1940 where he remained.

János Egri (1913–): chemical engineer, an active participant in the armed resistance in 1944.

Pál Engelmann (1854–1916): tinsmith. A founding member of the Hungarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (1889–92). Left the party and joined various opposition groups. Worked as a journalist in his later years.

Ferenc Erdei (1910–71): economist. Carried on important activities as a scholar and political writer from the thirties onwards. A founder of the National Peasant Party in 1939, and one of its leaders from 1945 onwards. Served as Minister of Home Affairs from 1945; became Minister of Agriculture in 1949 and was Deputy Prime Minister in 1955–6. Became Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1957.

Mór Erdélyi (1877–1929): printer. Joined the MSzDP in 1890, one of the founders of the co-operative movement in Hungary. Served as People's Commissar for Public Provision under the Republic of Councils.

János Erőss (1889–1962): lawyer, member of the Independent Smallholders' Party. An MP. Left Hungary in 1948 and settled in the United States.

Móricz Esterházy (1881–1960): landowner. Became an MP in 1906. Served as Prime Minister in 1917. Pursued no political activity between 1919–31. Returned to the political scene after 1931, as a government party politician; emigrated from Hungary in 1956.

István Farkas (1869–1944): shoemaker. Joined the MSzDP in 1890 and was secretary of that party from 1911 onwards. A social democratic MP between 1922–31. Editor of *Népszava* 1928–31. Deported by the Gestapo in 1944. Died in the Dachau concentration camp.

Károly Farkas (1842–1907): ironworker. One of the pioneers of the Hungarian socialist working class movement. Became familiar with socialist ideas when abroad. After his return to Hungary he established contact between the First International and the Hungarian labour movement. He established the General Sickness Relief Fund and the Hungarian Workers' Party.

Mihály Farkas (1904–65): printer, politician. Joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party in Kassa (now Košice) in 1921. A leader of the Communist Youth International in 1929–37. Came to Hungary at the end of 1944. A secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, later served as Minister of Defence. An initiator and principal executor of the political trials of the fifties, in which innocent people were tried and sentenced on the basis of trumped-up

- charges. For this he was expelled from the party in 1956 and sentenced to imprisonment. Worked as a reader at a publisher after release.
- Lajos Fehér (1917–81):** teacher, politician. Joined the KMP in 1942. Leader of the armed anti-fascist resistance in Budapest in 1944. Worked mainly as a political writer from 1949 onwards. A member of the MSzMP CC in 1956. Deputy Prime Minister in 1962–74.
- Endre Fejes (1923–)** writer.
- László Fényes (1871–1944):** journalist. Member of the National Council after the victory of the 1918 revolution. Joined the social democrats in 1921. Emigrated in 1924. Died in New York.
- Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933):** psychiatrist.
- Béni Ferenczy (1890–1967)** sculptor, graphic artist.
- Rezső Fiedler (1881–1939):** iron turner. Joined the MSzDP in 1900. Party secretary in Arad in 1910. A founder member of the KMP in 1918. Served as a people's commissar in 1919, then emigrated, first to Czechoslovakia, then to France and eventually to the Soviet Union. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938, and was victim of the violations of the law.
- József Fischer (1901–):** architect.
- Jenő Fock (1916–)** technician, politician. Joined the KMP in 1932. Sentenced by a military court to three years imprisonment in 1940. Filled various party posts from 1945 onwards. Member of the Political Committee of the MSzMP CC in 1956. Served as Deputy Prime Minister in 1961–7 and as Prime Minister between 1967–75.
- Béla Fogarasi (1891–1959):** philosopher. Joined the working class movement in 1918. Head of the Workers' University under the Republic of Councils. Worked for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany between 1921–30. Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1933. Returned to Hungary in 1945. University professor, director of the Institute of Philosophy.
- Ferenc Földes (1910–43):** journalist. Joined the communist movement in 1932. Imprisoned in 1934. Obtained a doctorate in philosophy in Bologna in 1938. On the staff of *Népszava* in 1941. Sent to the front with a punishment battalion in 1944 where he was killed.
- Louis Franchet d'Esperey (1856–1942):** French general, later marshal. Concluded an armistice agreement with the government of the Hungarian bourgeois democratic revolution in November 1918. An organizer and director of intervention against the Hungarian Republic of Councils and Soviet Russia in spring 1919.
- Leó Frankel (1844–96):** silversmith, politician. Joined the labour movement in Germany and France during the mid-1860s and took part in the work of the First International. Commissioner for Labour under the Paris Commune in 1871. Sentenced to death in his absence after the fall of the Commune. In exile he became one of Marx's closest associates. Lived in Hungary in 1876–83 and initiated the founding of the first legal socialist

workers' party (the Hungarian General Workers' Party). A leader of the Second International from 1889 up to the time of his death.

István Friedrich (1883–1951): engineer, industrialist, politician. Began his career as a bourgeois democrat. A leader of the counter-revolutionary movement under the Republic of Councils. Served as Prime Minister between August and November 1919. An opposition MP under the Horthy regime, he supported the House of Habsburg's claim to the Hungarian throne.

István Friss (1903–78): economist, academician. Joined the communist working class movement in 1922. Spent years in prison and in exile. Worked in the Communist Party apparatus from 1945 as an architect of economic policy. Later became head of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Economics Institute.

Sándor Fürst (1902–32): office worker. Joined the illegal Communist Party in 1926 and became one of its leaders in 1928. Arrested in 1932 as a member of the secretariat directing Communist Party work in Hungary. Sentenced to death under martial law and executed.

Ernő Garami (1876–1935): technician, politician. Leader of the Social Democratic Party in 1898–1918 and the editor of the party's paper. Served as a minister under the bourgeois democratic government of 1918–9 and lived in exile in Switzerland under the Republic of Councils. Returned briefly to Hungary in August 1919, took part in reorganizing the Social Democratic Party, then fled abroad once again to escape the tide of counter-revolution. Lived and worked in Hungary as a correspondent of the party paper in 1929–31 and from 1934 until he died.

Sándor Garbai (1879–1947): stonemason, politician. Member of the party leadership in 1901–19, later a founder and leader of the Construction Workers' Trade Union. Served as Prime Minister under the Republic of Councils in 1919. From autumn 1919 until he died, Garbai lived in exile and took part in the activity of *émigré* social democratic groups.

László Gereblyés (1904–68): office worker, poet. Began to publish his works in left-wing literary journals in the 1920s.

Ernő Gerő (1898–80): economist, politician. Joined the communist movement in 1918. Lived in exile—with the exception of a brief stay in Hungary in 1922 which ended in his arrest—after the fall of the Republic of Councils in Czechoslovakia, France, Spain and the Soviet Union. Returned to Hungary at the end of 1944. Became member of the top leadership of the MKP and (up to 1956) an architect of Hungary's economic policy. First Secretary of the party between June–October 1956. Expelled from the MSzMP in 1962.

György Goldman (1904–45): sculptor. Joined the illegal Communist Party in 1932. Arrested in 1942 and sentenced by a military court to life imprisonment. Died in the Dachau concentration camp.

Rudolf Golub (1901–44): miner. Joined the labour movement in 1917. Lived in France between 1923–32, where he joined the Communist Party. Expelled from France in 1932 and moved to the Soviet Union. Returned to Hun-

gary in 1938 and became an organizer of the miners' anti-fascist movement. Arrested in November 1944 and deported to Germany. Died in an unknown place and under unknown circumstances.

Ferenc Gordon (1893–1972): economist. Became an MP of the Smallholders' Party in 1945, served as Minister of Finance and later as ambassador in Berlin. Resigned his post in 1947, and moved to Argentina where he worked as an economist until he died.

János Gyöngyösi (1893–1951): teacher, journalist, politician. Served as Foreign Minister between December 1944 and March 1947.

Imre Györi (1924–87): printer, functionary. Worked as a Central Committee secretary of the MSzMP between 1974–80.

Imre Györk (1886–1958): lawyer. Social democratic MP in 1922–39 and in 1945–7. Imprisoned on trumped-up charges between 1950–5.

Pál Hajdu (1896–1937): journalist. Joined the labour movement in 1914. A founder member of the Communist Party and a senior correspondent of the party paper *Vörös Újság*. Sentenced to a long term in prison after the defeat of the Republic of Councils. Sent to the Soviet Union under a prisoner exchange agreement in 1922, where he worked as a journalist and editor until his death. A victim of the violations of legality in the Soviet Union.

Jenő Hamburger (1883–1936): physician. Joined the labour movement at the turn of the century. Imprisoned for anti-war activity during the First World War. Secretary of the MSzDP in autumn 1918; served as a people's commissar in 1919 and was commander of an army corps. Went into exile after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and took part in reorganizing the Communist Party. Lived in the Soviet Union for the rest of his life where he worked as a doctor.

József Haubrich (1883–1939): iron caster, trade union official functionary. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils; city commander of Budapest. Sentenced to death after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the so-called people's commissar trials, emigrated to the Soviet Union under the 1922 prisoner exchange agreement. Became a victim of the violations of legality in the Soviet Union.

László Háý (1891–1975): economist. Joined the working class movement in 1909. Served in the Red Army under the Republic of Councils, emigrating after its defeat. Worked in foreign trade in the Soviet Union, then carried out scientific work. Returned to Hungary in 1945 and was one of the reorganizers of Hungarian foreign trade. Served as a minister in 1954–6, after which he became Rector of the University of Economics.

András Hegedűs (1922–): economist, sociologist. Joined the communist movement in 1942. Served as a youth leader in 1945–7, as a minister between 1951–5 and as Prime Minister in 1955–6. Engaged in scientific work after 1957.

Ármin Helfgott (1878–1942): engineer. Joined the labour movement in 1917, the KMP in December 1918. Production Commissar (director) of the United Incandescent Works under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to impri-

sonment after the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sent to the Soviet Union under a prisoner exchange agreement, where he was arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938. Died in prison.

Ákos Hevesi (1884–1937): agronomist. Joined the working class movement in 1909, became member of the KMP in 1919. Served as a top official in the People's Commissariat for Agriculture under the Republic of Councils, for which he was arrested after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sent to the Soviet Union under a prisoner exchange agreement. Died in the Spanish Civil War in 1937.

Gyula Hevesi (1890–1970): engineer. Joined the labour movement in 1917, the KMP in December 1918. Served as People's Commissar for Social Production under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat. Engaged in technical scientific activity in the Soviet Union. Returned to Hungary in 1948 and continued his scientific work.

Iván Héjjas (1890–1950): landowner, commander of extreme right-wing terrorist detachments between 1919–21.

Antal Hidas (1898–1980): poet.

János Hirossik (1887–1950): tiler. Became a trade union leader in 1908. A founder member of the KMP in 1918. Secretary of the united party under the Republic of Councils and served as a people's commissar. Emigrated in autumn 1919. Took part in the reorganizing of the KMP. Lived in exile in Germany and Czechoslovakia and returned to Hungary in 1942. Joined the resistance movement in 1944.

Lajos Honti (1900–44): house painter. Served in the Red Army under the Republic of Councils, for which he was sentenced to imprisonment by the counter-revolutionary regime. Joined the KMP in 1932 and became a leader of the communist-run trade union opposition. A delegate to the Seventh Congress of Comintern. Arrested in 1942, tried and deported to Dachau in November 1944.

Miklós Horthy (1868–1957): career army officer. Rear Admiral of the Austro-Hungarian Fleet. Minister of Defence in the Szeged counter-revolutionary government in 1919, commander-in-chief of the so-called National Army. Regent of Hungary between 1920–44. On 16 October 1944 Germany forced him to resign, after which he was taken to Germany and eventually moved to Portugal.

János Hrabje (1841–?): carpenter. Joined the work of the First International in London in the 1860s. Member of the Supreme Council in 1865–6. Returned to Hungary to organize the Hungarian socialist working class movement. Founded the General Workers' Association in 1868 and became its first leader. Retired from political activity in 1869.

Ferenc Huszti (1893–1938): lawyer, journalist. Joined the labour movement in 1912, the KMP in 1919. Acted as public prosecutor under the Republic of Councils and emigrated after its defeat. Settled in the Soviet Union in 1923.

Head of the KMP Foreign Committee between 1931-36. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1937. Died in prison.

Illyés Gyula (1902-83): poet and prose writer.

Béla Imrédy (1891-1946): lawyer, economist, politician. Served as Minister of Finance in 1932-5. President of the National Bank of Hungary between 1935-8. A leader of the fascist opposition, Prime Minister from May 1938 to February 1939. Served as minister following the German occupation of Hungary. Sentenced to death by the People's Tribunal after the liberation of Hungary in 1945 and executed.

Mihály Jamrich (1921-79): construction worker. Joined the labour movement in 1936, the KMP in 1939. Leader of a partisan group in 1944. Minister of Home Affairs, official after the liberation after which he worked as a factory manager.

Ferenc Jancsik (1882-1944): iron turner. Joined the labour movement in 1901. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War fought for Soviet power in 1917-8 and was one of the organizers of the internationalist movement of Hungarian prisoners of war. Returned to Hungary in November 1918, was a founder member of the KMP and served as a commander of the Red Guard under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to imprisonment after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922. Arrested in 1937 on trumped-up charges. Died in prison.

Antonín Janoušek (1877-1941): Czech ironworker, president of the Slovak Council Government at the time of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. Sentenced to imprisonment for his activity by the counter-revolutionary regime. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922.

Béla Józsa (1898-1943): stone-cutter. A soldier of the Red Army under the Republic of Councils. Joined the Rumanian Communist Party in Transylvania, which was ceded to Rumania after the First World War. A leading organizer of the work of the KMP in northern Transylvania after the annexation of the latter by Hungary in 1940. Arrested in November 1943. Tortured to death.

Ferenc Julier (1878-1946): staff colonel, Chief of Staff of the Third Army Corps of the Red Army in 1919, and of the entire Red Army in July 1919.

Gyula Justh (1850-1917): landowner, lawyer, politician. Forged a political alliance with the MSZDP in 1911 to further the cause of universal suffrage.

Lajos Kabók (1884-1945): engine fitter, trade union leader. Became a trade union official in 1913, member of the MSZDP leadership in 1919-44. MP between 1922 and '35 and in 1939-44. Became general secretary of the Ironworkers' Union in 1938. Arrested and executed in November 1944.

Sándor Karácsonyi (1892-1944): iron turner, Social Democratic Party and trade union leader. Arrested by the Arrow Cross in November 1944, shortly after the Szálasi putsch and executed.

Frigyes Karikás (1891-1942): locksmith. Joined the labour movement in 1908.

Served in the army during the First World War, then taken prisoner by the Russians. Fought for Soviet Power in 1917–8. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and became a founder member of the KMP. Served as Political Commissar of the 39th Brigade under the Republic of Councils. Lived in Austria, the Soviet Union and in France after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and took part in the work of the *émigré* communists. Returned illegally to Hungary in 1932, was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison. Went to the Soviet Union after his release where he worked in important economic posts. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1937 and died in prison.

Lajos Kassák (1887–1967): ironworker, socialist writer.

András Kasztel (1914–43): office worker, journalist. Joined the labour movement in the early thirties. Joined *Népszava* as a foreign affairs correspondent in 1940, joined the KMP in 1941. An organizer and director of the developing anti-war and anti-fascist movements. Sent to the eastern front in 1943 with a punishment battalion where he was murdered.

János Kádár (1912–): technician, politician. Joined the labour movement in 1929, the KMP in 1931. A leader of the communist youth movement, he became member of the Budapest Committee of the KMP in 1941 and later of the Central Committee. Secretary of KMP from 1943 and an organizer of the resistance movement from autumn 1944 onwards. Became secretary of the Communist Party's Budapest area committee in 1945 and deputy first secretary in 1946 and 1948. Served as Minister of Home Affairs in 1948–50. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1951. Rehabilitated in 1954. A secretary of the MDP from July 1956. Became First Secretary of the MSzMP on 4 November 1956. Served as Prime Minister in 1956–8 and in 1961–5. Elected General Secretary of MSzMP in 1986.

Gyula Kállai (1910–): journalist, politician. Joined the KMP in 1931, one of the organizers of the left-wing university youth movement. Worked for *Népszava* in 1939–44 and represented the Communist Party on the leading bodies of the resistance movement. Filled various state and party posts after 1945. Served as Foreign Minister in 1948–51. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1951 and sentenced to imprisonment. Rehabilitated in 1954. Took part in reorganizing the party in autumn 1956, became a government minister between 1957–67, served as Prime Minister between 1965–7; later became president of the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front.

Miklós Kállay (1887–1967): landowner, lawyer, politician. Served as a minister, with short breaks, from 1932 onwards, Prime Minister from March 1942 until the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944. Arrested by the Germans and deported to a concentration camp. Did not return to Hungary after 1945, settled in the United States where he died.

Henrik Kalmár (1870–1931): printer. Editor of German-language social democrat papers. Became under-secretary for German-minority affairs in 1918 and People's Commissar for German Minority Affairs in the Republic of

Council's government in 1919. Tried and sentenced after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat, released under a prisoner exchange agreement, settled in Czechoslovakia where he worked in the Social Democratic Party for the rest of his life.

János Katona (1907–): leather worker. Joined the working class movement in 1925, the KMP in 1934; a trade union leader.

Gyula Károlyi (1871–1947): politician. Served as Prime Minister under the counter-revolutionary government formed in Arad on 5 May 1919. Filled the same post in 1931–2.

Imre Károlyi (1873–1943): landowner and writer on economics.

Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955): descendent of an aristocratic family, a democratic politician who sympathized with socialism. An ally of the democratic forces even before the First World War, Károlyi founded an independent political party in 1916 and represented radical and pacifist standpoints. Leader of the 1918 Bourgeois Democratic Revolution, Prime Minister and eventually President of the Hungarian Republic. Loyal to the Republic of Councils. Lived in exile in 1919–46 and worked in close alliance with the communists. Acted as Hungary's ambassador to France in 1947–9. Resigned his post because of the Rajk trial and once again went into exile. His ashes were brought back to Hungary in 1962 and placed in the National Pantheon.

József Kelen (1892–1938): electrical engineer. Took part in the socialist organization of the technical intelligentsia in 1917. A founder member of the KMP. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to life imprisonment in 1920. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922, where he did technical scientific work. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938 and became a victim of the violations of legality in the Soviet Union.

Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer (1881–1948): lawyer, politician. Served as Minister of Home Affairs in 1931–5 and in 1938–44. Arrested after the German occupation of Hungary and deported to a concentration camp. Did not return to Hungary after 1945.

Károly Kernstok (1873–1940): painter.

Anna Kéthly (1889–1976): office worker, politician and trade union leader. Joined the working class movement in 1917. Member of the party leadership and MP between 1922 and 1948. Expelled from the party as an opponent of worker unit in March 1948. Attempted to reorganize the MSZDP at the end of October 1956. Went into exile in November 1956.

György Kilián (1907–43): locksmith. Joined the KMP in 1928; in 1930–2 was leading official of KIMSz. Served prison sentences in 1932 and 1935 and once again until 1938. Emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1939. Enlisted in the Red Army in 1941 and later volunteered for partisan activity in Hungary. Disappeared in Poland on the way back to Hungary.

György Király (1887–1922): literary historian.

- János Kiss (1883–1944):** lieutenant-general. Retired in 1939 in protest against German influence. Headed the official investigation into the 1943 massacre in Újvidék (now Novi Sad, Yugoslavia). Arrested at the end of November 1944, sentenced to death and executed.
- Károly Kiss (1903–83):** shoemaker. Joined the KMP in 1922 and became a leading official in 1925. Spent nine years in prison. An organizer of the resistance movement in 1944. Member of the leading bodies of the Communist Party from 1945 onwards almost without break. Served as Foreign Minister in 1950–1 and as Deputy Prime Minister in 1952–3. Was among the first in 1956 to take part in the reorganization of the party. A Central Committee Secretary until 1962. Vice-President of the Central Council of Trade Unions until his death.
- Anna Koltói (1891–44):** ironworker. Joined the working class movement during the First World War. Became a leader of the socialist women's movement in the twenties. Was shot dead after the Arrow Cross take-over in October 1944.
- Aladár Komjáth (1891–1937):** office worker, journalist, poet. Took part in the anti-war movement in the First World War. Joined the KMP in 1918 and edited the journal *Internationale*. Lived in exile in Italy, Austria, and Germany after the defeat of the Republic of Councils. Edited the Comintern journals *Inprekorr* and, later, *Rundschau*.
- Mihály Komócsin (1898–1978):** construction worker. Joined the labour movement in 1912. Fought in the Red Army under the Republic of Councils and eventually became a leading representative of the left wing in the MSzDP's Szeged branch. An organizer of the KMP in liberated Szeged in 1944, an MP in the Provisional National Assembly. Filled various state and trade union posts.
- Ottó Korvin (1894–1919):** office worker. Became an organizer of socialist office workers in 1917. An organizer of the illegal anti-war movement in 1918. A founder member of the KMP in November 1918. Head of the political department of the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs under the Republic of Councils. Stayed in Budapest after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat to organize underground party activity, but was caught, sentenced to death and executed.
- István Kossa (1904–65):** tram conductor. Joined the labour movement in 1922. Acted as general secretary of his trade union between 1933 and 1942. Taken to the eastern front with a punishment battalion in 1942 where he was taken prisoner by the Russians. Returned to Budapest, then under German occupation, in November 1944 to organize underground activity. Member of the leading bodies of the MKP and later of the MDP after 1945. Acted as General Secretary of the Trade Union Council in 1945–8, after which he worked in various government posts. Became member of the MSzMP CC in 1956, and served as a minister in the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government.

- Lajos Kossuth (1802–94):** lawyer, politician. Leader of the 1848–9 Revolution and War of Independence. Lived in exile from August 1849 to the time of his death.
- Béla Kovács (1908–59):** peasant and politician. Acted as the Independent Smallholders' Party's General Secretary in 1945–7. Arrested in 1947 on charges of anti-state conspiracy and sentenced to imprisonment. After his release in 1956 he returned to the political scene. Took part in reorganizing the Smallholders' Party in October 1956. MP from 1956 until he died.
- Imre Kovács (1913–80):** writer, journalist, Peasant Party politician. A leader of the progressive student movement, the March Front of the thirties. Took part in the anti-fascist resistance movement. An organizer of the National Peasant Party after the liberation of Hungary. Left Hungary in 1948.
- Sándor Krammer (1898–1920):** shop assistant. Became president of the organization of social democrat young workers in 1914 and later served in the army. A founder member of the KMP. Acted as prosecutor under the Republic of Councils and then as a Political Commissioner in the Red Army. Emigrated to Yugoslavia after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, but was arrested and handed over to the Hungarian authorities. Sentenced to death and executed in 1920.
- Róbert Kreutz (1923–44):** ironworker. Joined the labour movement during the late thirties, became a member of the Communist Youth Federation in 1944. Arrested for taking part in the armed resistance movement in November 1944, sentenced to death and executed.
- Gyula Kulich (1914–45):** tailor. Joined the working class movement in 1935. Became leader of the Social Democratic Party's youth organization in 1938 and at the same time a member of the KMP's leadership in Hungary. Arrested in 1940 and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Together with other political prisoners from Hungarian prisons was deported to Dachau in November 1944, where he died.
- Béla Kun (1886–1939):** journalist. Joined the labour movement in 1902. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1916 and joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917. Edited newspapers and fought in the armed struggle for Soviet power. Became president of the international federation of communist prisoners of war. Returned to Hungary in November 1918 and initiated the formation of the KMP of which he was elected the president. Leader of the Republic in Councils, he also served as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Defence. Emigrated to Austria in August 1919, took part in reorganizing the KMP and eventually settled in the Soviet Union. Went to Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia illegally on several occasions. Recalled from his posts after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International on the pretext of his sectarian mistakes. Arrested on trumped-up charges in summer 1937. Died in prison.
- Zsigmond Kunfi (1879–1929):** teacher, journalist and politician. Joined the labour movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Joined *Népszava* as a

correspondent in 1907 and edited *Szocializmus* (Socialism), the party's theoretical journal. Became member of the party leadership in 1909. A pacifist during the First World War, he supported the left-wing opposition inside the party as well as the anti-war groups. Served as a minister in the government of the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution. Became a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils, but retired at the end of June 1919 because of disagreement with the communists. Lived in exile after August 1919, became the leader of the *Világosság* (Light) Group of exiled social democrats in 1920, and took part in the work of the Austrian Socialist Party. A relentless opponent of the Horthy regime and a stringent critic of the MSZDP leadership. Committed suicide in 1929.

Jenő Landler (1875–1928): lawyer, politician. Joined the labour movement in 1906. Took part in the preparation of the 1918 revolution and pressed for the merger of the KMP and the MSZDP. Served as People's Commissar for Home Affairs under the Republic of Councils and became commander of an army corps and later commander-in-chief of the Red Army. Lived in exile after August 1919, took part in reorganizing the KMP, from 1920 until he died was member of the party's leading bodies. While he lived in Vienna (1920–7) he was one of the organizers of party activity in Hungary.

Jenő László (1878–1919): lawyer. Joined the labour movement as a student at the beginning of the twentieth century. Became a trade union legal adviser in 1906. A founder member of the KMP in 1918. Acted as the party's prosecutor. Served as the Political Commissar of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal under the Republic of Councils. Arrested after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat, sentenced to death and executed.

Gyula Lengyel (1888–1941): teacher, economist. Joined the labour movement in 1905, became a member of the KMP in January 1919. Served as People's Commissar for Finance under the Republic of Councils. Went into exile after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat, took part in the reorganization of the KMP and filled top posts in the Soviet foreign trade organizations from 1922 onwards. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1937. Died in prison.

József Lengyel (1896–1975): poet, writer, journalist. A founder member of the KMP.

János Lékai (1895–1925): office worker. Joined the working class movement in 1917. As member of an illegal anti-war group he attempted to assassinate Count István Tisza, leader of the war party, in October 1918, for which he was arrested. Released from prison by the bourgeois democratic revolution. Secretary of the communist-led young workers' organization. Worked at the People's Commissariat for Public Education under the Republic of Councils and acted as President of the KIMSz. Took part in the founding of the Communist Youth International and its early activity. Moved to the United States in 1922 where he headed the exiled Hungarian communist group until he died.

Géza Losonczy (1917–57): journalist. Joined the working class movement during the mid-thirties, the KMP in 1939. Worked for *Népszava* between 1940–4, and at the editorial offices of *Szabad Nép* (Free People), the MKP daily, after the liberation. Acted as Undersecretary of State in 1947–51, first for the Council of Ministers and later for the Ministry of Public Education. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1951. Rehabilitated in 1954. Worked as a journalist and newspaper editor after his release. Served as a Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government between 30 October and 4 November 1956. Arrested for counter-revolutionary activity. Died in prison.

Márton Lovászi (1864–1927): lawyer, journalist. An MP in 1901–18. A Károlyi supporter during the First World War, served as a minister under the bourgeois democratic revolution, after which he retired from politics. Went into exile during the Republic of Councils. Returned to Hungary in August 1919, made an attempt to return to public life, but was unable to identify himself with the counter-revolution. Went into exile once again, returning to Hungary shortly before his death.

Géza Lukachich (1865–1943): lieutenant-general of the Austro-Hungarian Army, military commander of Budapest before the revolution in autumn 1918.

Georg Lukács (1885–1971): philosopher. A prominent figure of the progressive movements of the age. Joined the KMP in December 1918. Served as People's Commissar for Public Education under the Republic of Councils, and took part in the battles of the Red Army. Went into exile in autumn 1919, took part in the reorganization of the KMP, became a member of the party's leading organizations and carried out illegal party work in Hungary as well. The theses he submitted to the Second Congress of the KMP triggered off a fierce debate, after which—in the wake of the debate and the criticism which followed—pursued scholarly activities first in Germany and later in the Soviet Union. Returned to Hungary in 1945, became a university professor and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Served as Minister for Public Education in Imre Nagy's government in 1956. Member of the MSzMP from 1967 onwards. Worked on his scholarly projects almost until the last moments of his life.

József Madzsar (1876–1944): dentist. Began his career as a politician in the movement of the progressive intelligentsia at the turn of the century. Joined the MSzMP in 1919 and had to leave the country in 1921. Returned to Hungary in 1924 and became a leader of the MSzDP's left-wing opposition. Joined the KMP in 1927, edited *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review), the party's legal journal. Expelled from the MSzDP in 1931. Imprisoned on several occasions, emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1936. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938 and died in prison.

Máté Major (1904–86): architect, university professor.

Pál Maléter (1917–58): career army officer. Was taken prisoner by the Soviet Army during the Second World War, attended a school for partisans and fought against the Nazis in northern Transylvania. Served in the Hungarian People's

Army after the liberation, went over to the side of the counter-revolution on 25 October 1956 and served as Minister of Defence in Imre Nagy's government. Sentenced to death for these activities and executed.

György Marosán (1908–): baker, politician. Joined the labour movement in 1923, the MSzDP in 1927. Became trade union secretary in 1939 and secretary of the Social Democratic Party in 1943. Was arrested on several occasions for his activity in the working class movement. Became the MSzDP's secretary in 1945, later deputy secretary general. An outstanding leader of the left wing and an advocate of working class unity. Became deputy secretary general after the merger of the two workers' parties, and the secretary of the Greater Budapest Party Committee. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1950 and imprisoned for six years. Rehabilitated after his release. Was among the first to reorganize the party in 1956, became member of the MSzMP CC and the Secretariat. Also served as Minister of State and the first secretary of the Greater Budapest Party Committee until 1962.

Flóra Martos (1897–1938): chemical technician. Joined the labour movement in 1918. Took part in the support of political prisoners after the defeat of the Republic of Councils, was an organizer of Red Aid and joined the KMP in 1927. Arrested by the military investigation authorities in 1935. Released in 1937 and died of illness contracted in prison.

János Mácza (1893–1974): writer, art historian. Joined left-wing avant-garde literary groups during the First World War, actively participated in the cultural life of the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Worked as editor of *Kassai Munkás* (Kassa Worker), a Hungarian-language communist paper published in Czechoslovakia, between 1920–2. Moved to the Soviet Union in 1923, where he carried out scholarly activity as a professor of art history.

Imre Mező (1905–56): tailor. Joined the Communist Party in Belgium in 1929, fought in the Spanish Civil War in 1936–9, took part in the French resistance from 1943 onwards. Returned to Hungary in 1945, and became a party activist. Worked as secretary of the Budapest Party Committee—with short breaks—from 1950 until he died. Organized the defence of the party's headquarters during the counter-revolution, in the course of which he was fatally wounded.

Ernő Mihályfi (1898–1972): journalist. MP from 1947 to the time of his death. Served as Minister of Information in 1947 and later as acting Foreign Minister.

József Mikulík (1889–1933): turner. Joined the MSzDP before the First World War, took up an anti-war stand during the First World War. A founder member of the KMP and served as a political commissar under the Republic of Councils. Arrested after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and sentenced to imprisonment. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922.

József Mindszenty (1892–1975): Roman Catholic priest. Became Bishop of Veszp-

rém in 1944 and Archbishop of Esztergom and Hungary's Primate in September 1945. An opponent of the transformation brought about by the people's democracy, he was arrested in 1948 and sentenced to life imprisonment. Freed by counter-revolutionaries on 31 October 1956. Called for the restoration of the old regime in his public statements. Lived in the United States' Embassy in Budapest between 4 November 1956 and autumn 1971, after which he left Hungary.

Illés Mónus (1886–1944): shoemaker, politician. Joined the working class movement at the beginning of the century. Became a member of the Social Democratic Party leadership in 1927 and the editor in chief of *Népszava* and *Szocializmus*. Became the MSzDP's secretary for education in 1939. Arrested several times in 1944 and executed after the Arrow Cross putsch.

Zsigmond Móricz (1879–1942): writer.

Antal Mosolygó (1891–1927): car polisher. Joined the working class movement before the First World War. Pursued anti-war activities in 1917–8. A founder member of the KMP. Acted as a political commissar under the Republic of Councils. Arrested and tried after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922.

Ferenc Münnich (1886–1967): lawyer, politician. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War. Joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917 and took part in the armed defence of Soviet power. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and was a founder member of the KMP. Served as political commissar of the Sixth Division of the Red Army and emigrated after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Fought in the Spanish Civil War in 1936–9. Joined the Soviet Army in 1942. Returned to Hungary in 1945. Worked as Budapest's commissioner of police in 1946–9 and for the diplomatic service in 1950–6. Took part in the reorganization of the party in November 1956 and served as Primer Minister in 1961–5.

Ferenc Nagy (1903–79): farmer, politician. Served as Primer Minister in 1946–7. Left Hungary in May 1947 and took part in Hungarian *émigré* activity.

Imre Nagy (1896–1958): economist, politician. Enlisted into the Red Army as a Russian prisoner of war in 1918 and joined the Russian Communist Party. Returned to Hungary in 1921 and continued activity in the working class movement. Was forced to emigrate in 1929. Worked as a research worker in the Soviet Union and returned to Hungary in 1944. Served as Minister of Agriculture and as Minister of Home Affairs. Member of the MDP between 1945–55 and then a member of the MDP's Central Leadership. In 1951 became Minister of Food and Requisitioning and the Deputy Prime Minister. He served as Prime Minister between 1953 and March 1955. Expelled from the party in December 1955 and readmitted on 13 October 1956. Served once again as Prime Minister between 24 October and 4 November 1956 during the counter-revolution. Sentenced to death for his 1956 activities and executed.

- Jenő Nagy (1898–1944):** staff colonel, head of the general staff of the resistance movement. Arrested on 22 November 1944, sentenced to death and executed.
- István Nagyatádi Szabó (1863–1924):** farmer, politician. MP from 1908 until his death. Served in the government of the bourgeois democratic revolution of 1918, but from autumn 1919 until autumn 1924 he also served in the governments of the counter-revolutionary regime.
- László Nánási (1906–):** peasant. A founder of the National Peasant Party. Became an MP in 1945 and a member of the Presidential Council in 1949.
- Dezső Nemes (1908–85):** journeyman, upholsterer, politician, historian. Joined the KMP in 1926 and was one of the organizers of underground party work in Hungary in 1933–6. Moved to the Soviet Union in 1936. Returned to Hungary in 1945 and worked in journalism and cultural fields. Became member of the MSZMP CC in June 1957. Worked as editor in chief of *Népszabadság* in 1957–61 and in 1977–80. Worked as secretary of the Central Committee between 1961 and 1963. Later became the director of different scientific institutions.
- László Németh (1901–1975):** writer, dramatist, translator.
- Ernő Némety (1911–45):** textile worker. Joined the labour movement in 1934 and became a trade union leader. Joined the KMP in 1940. Arrested in 1942 and tried. Deported to Dachau in 1944, where he was executed.
- György Nyisztor (1869–1956):** agricultural worker. Became a leader of the National Federation of Agricultural Workers in 1906. Belonged to the left wing of the MSZDP. Served as People's Commissar for Agriculture under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to imprisonment after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922.
- Miklós Nyárádi (1905–76):** lawyer, Smallholders' Party politician. Served as Minister of Finance in 1947–8. Left Hungary in 1948.
- Árpád Ódry (1876–1937):** actor.
- Gábor Oláh (1881–1942):** poet.
- Gyula Ortutay (1910–78):** ethnographer, politician. Served as Minister for Religion and Public Education in 1947–50.
- Gyula Ostenburg-Moravek ():** army officer, commander of a counter-revolutionary detachment during the period of white terror (1919–21).
- Ernő Osvát (1877–1929):** editor, writer. Editor of the progressive literary journal *Nyugat*.
- Mihály Padányi (1916–):** engineer. Leader of a partisan group in Budapest in 1944.
- György Pálffy (1908–1949):** army officer. Left the army in 1939 and worked as an engineer. A leader of armed anti-fascist resistance in 1944. Served as Deputy Minister of Defence in 1948. Sentenced to death on trumped-up charges and executed in 1949.
- Lajos Papp (1906–73):** stone-cutter. Joined the KMP in 1927. Became a full-time

party activist in 1936. Became member of the KMP Central Leadership in 1945 and one of the party's country branch secretaries.

István Pataki (1914-44): turner. Took part in the young socialist workers' movement. Joined armed anti-fascist resistance in 1944. Arrested and executed.

Ferenc Pataki (1892-1944): teacher. Was taken prisoner of war by the Russians in 1915. Joined the Bolshevik Party in 1916. Came to Hungary at the head of a partisan parachute division in 1943. Captured by the fascists in 1944 and executed.

Gyula Peidl (1873-1943): typesetter, politician. Became a trade union leader in 1908, member of the MSZDP leadership in 1919. Served as Prime Minister on 1-6 August 1919. MP in 1922-31.

Barnabás Pesti (1920-44): chemical engineer. Joined the communist movement in France. Returned to Hungary in 1943. Sentenced to death for his participation in armed anti-fascist resistance and executed.

Sándor Petőfi (1823-49): poet.

Károly Peyer (1881-1956): engine fitter, politician. Became a social democratic functionary in 1906, and member of the MSZDP in 1917. The most important leader of the MSZDP in 1919-44 and the architect of the party's political line. Found himself increasingly in opposition to the party's policy after 1945. Left the MSZDP in 1947 and ran for election on an opposition party ticket. Left Hungary in autumn 1947 and settled in the United States.

Zoltán Pfeiffer: lawyer, politician. Began his political career in the Independent Smallholders' Party. Took part in the resistance movement in 1944. Became member of his party's national leadership in 1945. An MP. Left the Smallholders' Party in March 1946 and founded the right-wing Hungarian Independence Party. Left Hungary in November 1947 and took part in the activities of Hungarian *émigré* groups.

József Pogány (1886-1939): journalist, politician. Acquired a Ph. D. at Budapest University in 1909. Joined the MSZDP. Acted as president of the Soldiers' Council during the bourgeois democratic revolution. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated in 1919 and joined the communist movement. Lived in the United States in the twenties, where, as John Pepper, he became an official of the Communist Party of the United States. Moved to the Soviet Union in 1929. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1937 and fell victim to the violation of legality.

Sándor Poll (1898-1937): a booksellers' assistant. Fought in the Red Army under the Republic of Councils and emigrated after its defeat. Returned to Hungary in 1925 and was elected member of the KMP Central Committee. Arrested twice and spent eight years in prison. Went to the Soviet Union after his release, where he died of a serious illness contracted while in prison.

Ernő Pór (1889-1943): office worker. Joined the MSZDP in 1907. A founder of the KMP.

Pál Prónay (1875-1944): army officer. Commander of one of the counter-revolu-

tionary detachments in 1919, which massacred those who were in any way connected with the Republic of Councils.

Sándor Propper (1877–1956): upholsterer, politician. Joined the MSzDP in 1904, became a full-time party worker in 1908. MP in 1922–39. Became a co-operative manager in 1945. Joined the MDP in 1948.

Frigyes Puja (1921): type-setter, politician. Became the KMP's Csanád County secretary in 1946. Became a diplomat in 1953, and Foreign Minister in 1973.

József Rabinovits (1884–1940): goldsmith. Joined the MSzDP in 1901. Came into contact with the Bolsheviks as a prisoner of war in the First World War. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and was one of the founder members of the KMP. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Arrested after its defeat. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922. Arrested in 1938 and fell victim to the violation of legality.

Gedeon Ráday (1872–1936): landowner. Became Lieutenant of Pest County in 1910, and Minister of Home Affairs in 1921.

Miklós Radnóti (1909–44): poet.

László Rajk (1909–49): teacher, politician. Joined the KMP in 1931 as a university student. An organizer of the construction workers' strike in 1935. Fought in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. Returned to Hungary in 1941 and became a leader and later secretary of the KMP. Member of the MKP Central Leadership and Political Committee in 1945–9. Served as Minister of Home Affairs in 1946–8 and as Foreign Minister in 1948–9. Sentenced to death on trumped-up charges in 1949 and executed. Rehabilitated posthumously in 1953.

Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971): office worker, politician. Joined the MSzDP in 1910. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War. Returned to Hungary in 1919. A founder member of the KMP. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat and became secretary of the Comintern's Executive Committee. Returned to Hungary illegally in 1924. Arrested in 1925. Spent fifteen years in prison. Moved to the Soviet Union after his release in 1940. Returned in 1945 as First Secretary of the KMP. Leader of the Hungarian communist movement in 1945–56. Initially extremely popular, but later transformed this popularity into a cult of the personality. Responsible for the serious violations of the law in 1949–56, to which many innocent people fell victim. Removed from his post in 1956 and later expelled from the party. Moved to the Soviet Union in July 1956 where he lived for the rest of his life.

Márton Rátkai (1881–1951): actor.

Béla Reinitz (1878–1943): composer.

József Révai (1898–1959): journalist, politician. A founder member of the KMP in 1918. Worked for the *Vörös Újság*. Emigrated after the defeat of the Republic of Councils. A member of the KMP Central Committee in exile. Returned to Hungary illegally in 1930. Arrested and sentenced to three

years imprisonment. Emigrated after his release. Returned to Hungary in 1945 as a leader of the KMP. Worked as the party's leading ideologist. Wrote studies in the field of literary history and aesthetics.

Károly Rezi (1919-42): weaver. Joined the Federation of Young Communist Workers (KIMSz) in 1931 and later became a leader of one of the KMP's Budapest district committees. Arrested in 1942. Tortured to death in the course of interrogation.

István Ries (1885-1950): lawyer, politician. Joined the MSzDP in 1917, became member of the MSzDP leadership in 1933. Became Minister of Justice in 1945, and member of the MDP's Central Leadership in 1948. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1950. Died in prison. Rehabilitated in 1956.

Sándor Rónai (1892-1965): stonemason, politician. Joined the MSzDP in 1910 and became the MSzDP's Miskolc branch secretary. Filled important trade union posts. Member of the MDP's Central Leadership after the merger of the MSzDP and the MKP. Served as President of the Presidential Council in 1950-2 and as Speaker of Parliament between 1952 and 1962.

Zoltán Rónai (1880-1940): lawyer, politician. Carried on important activities as a theoretician and political writer in the early years of the twentieth century. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat. A leader of the social democrat *Világosság* (Light) Group in Vienna. Later worked in Brussels. Committed suicide after the German occupation of Belgium.

Leo Rothziegel (1892-1919): Austrian printer. A founder member of the Communist Party of Austria. Enlisted into the Hungarian Red Army in 1919 and died as one of its soldiers.

Ferenc Rózsa (1906-42): architect. Obtained his diploma in Germany, where he joined the labour movement. Returned to Hungary in 1931 and joined the KMP in 1932. Became one of the party's leaders in 1939, an organizer of anti-fascist resistance. Arrested in 1942. Tortured to death in the course of brutal police interrogation.

Richárd Rózsa (1904-43): chemical engineer. Became a communist in 1926 and member of the KIMSz Central Committee in 1928. Arrested on several occasions and spent seven years in prison. Emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1939. Fought in the Red Army in the Second World War. Volunteered for partisan activity in 1943. Parachuted into Poland where he disappeared without trace.

László Rudas (1855-1950): philosopher. Worked for *Népszava* before the First World War. A founder member of the MKP in 1918. Editor of *Vörös Újság* under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat. Pursued scholarly activity in the Soviet Union. Returned to Hungary in 1945. Became member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and director of the MKP's party school.

Endre Rudnyánszky (1884-1943): journalist. Came into contact with the Bolsheviks as a prisoner of war in the First World War. A leader and organizer of

Hungarian prisoners in Soviet Russia. Became member of the Communist International's Executive Committee in 1919-21. Drifted away from the working class movement after 1921.

Endre Ságvári (1913-44): lawyer, became a leader of the Social Democratic Party's National Youth Committee in 1937. Joined the KMP in 1940. Worked as a leader of the communist youth movement during the war. An organizer of armed anti-fascist resistance. Shot whilst fighting against the fascist.

Imre Sallai (1897-1932): office worker, politician. A founder member of the KMP in 1918, a leader of the security police under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat. Returned to Hungary in 1928 as a member of the KMP Central Committee. Arrested in 1932. Tried under martial law and sentenced to death.

Zoltán Schönherz (1905-42): electrical engineer, politician. Joined the communist youth movement in Kassa (now Košice, Czechoslovakia), his hometown, as a secondary school student. Became a functionary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and a youth leader in the early thirties. Joined the work of the KMP in 1939. Spent a brief period, illegally, in the Soviet Union in 1940. Returned to Hungary at the end of 1940 and became a member of the leading bodies of the KMP in Hungary. Arrested in summer 1942, sentenced to death and executed.

Géza Schulhof (1848-1910): lawyer, the first historian of the early Hungarian working class movement.

Pál Sebes (1899-1939): office worker, politician. Joined the KMP in 1927 and became member of the KMP Secretariat in 1929. Represented the KMP on the Communist International's Executive Committee in 1931-2. Arrested on trumped-up charges in the Soviet Union in 1937. Died in prison.

Ernő Seidler (1886-1940): office worker. Taken prisoner of war by the Russians in the First World War and made contact with the Bolsheviks. Returned to Hungary in 1918 and was a founder member of the KMP. Served as regiment commander under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat and lived in Czechoslovakia and Germany, and eventually settled in the Soviet Union. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1937. Died in prison.

Ferenc Simon (1907-45): shoemaker. Joined the KMP in 1931. Arrested in 1942. Died in a concentration camp at Dachau.

Ervin Sinkó (1898-1967): Hungarian writer who lived in Yugoslavia. Played an important role in the battles of the Republic of Councils in 1919. Moved to Yugoslavia in 1939. Fought with the Yugoslav partisans during the Second World War and became a university professor after the liberation.

Dezső Somló (1884-1923): shop assistant. Became a social democrat agitator in 1904, for which he was sentenced to three years imprisonment. A founder member of the KMP. Sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment for his activities under the Republic of Councils. Sent to the Soviet Union seriously ill,

under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922, there he worked as a Red Trade Union International functionary for the rest of his life.

Zoltán Somlyó (1882–1937): poet, journalist.

Erzsi Somogyi (1906–73): actress.

Miklós Somogyi (1896–1980): carpenter. Joined the MSzDP in 1920. Became President of the Construction Workers' Trade Union in 1942. Became a communist after 1945. Served as President of the Central Council of Trade Unions in 1956–65. An MP.

Dezső Sulyok (1897–1965): lawyer, politician. MP in 1935–9 and in 1945–7. Expelled from the Smallholders' Party at the beginning of 1946 after he formed a short-lived right-wing opposition party. Left Hungary in 1947.

Aurél Stromfeld (1878–1927): Austro-Hungarian staff officer. Joined the MSzDP at the end of 1918. Served as an Undersecretary for Defence during the bourgeois democratic revolution. Chief of Staff of the Red Army under the Republic of Councils (April–June 1919). Arrested and tried in August 1919. Became a renowned leader of the MSzDP left wing in 1922 and joined the KMP in 1925.

Sándor Szabados (1874–1938): journalist. Joined the working class movement in 1892. One of the first translators into Hungarian of the works of Marx and Engels. Served as People's Commissar for Public Education under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to life imprisonment in 1920. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922, where he carried on literary activities. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938. Died in prison.

Ervin Szabó (1877–1918): historian, social scientist. Came into contact with the working class movement at the turn of the century. Worked for *Népszava* in 1900–2. Edited the first Hungarian edition of the selected works of Marx and Engels between 1904–9. An intellectual leader of revolutionary anti-war trend during the First World War, and an outspoken critic of the MSzDP's policy. Died on the eve of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

István Szabó, see István Nagyatádi Szabó.

Árpád Szakasits (1888–1965): journeyman, stone-cutter, politician. Joined the working class movement in 1903. Became a trade union leader in 1908 and worked for *Népszava*. Became a department head at the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs under the Republic of Councils. Member of the MSzDP's leadership in 1925–48 and the Party's General Secretary in 1938–42. Editor-in-chief of *Népszava* in 1940–4. Leader of the Hungarian Front after the German occupation of Hungary. Served as the MSzDP's General Secretary in 1945–8 and became the Chairman of the MDP after the merger of the two workers' parties. Tried on trumped-up charges and imprisoned in 1950–6. Member of the MSzMP CC from 1959 until his death.

Ferenc Szálasi (1897–1946): staff officer, fascist politician. He formed the so-called Arrow Cross Party, on the Nazi pattern at the end of the thirties.

Staged a political take-over with German assistance on 15 October 1944. Inaugurated an open fascist dictatorship. Sentenced to death by the People's Tribunal and executed.

Tibor Szamuely (1890–1919): journalist. Joined the MSzDP in 1908. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War. From 1917 he took part in the armed struggle for Soviet power and played a leading role in the communist movement of prisoners of war. Returned to Hungary in January 1919, was co-opted into the KMP's Central Committee and became an editor of the party paper *Vörös Újság*. Served as a people's commissar under the Republic of Councils. Captured on the Austrian frontier after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and committed suicide.

Béla Szántó (1881–1951): office worker. Joined the MSzDP in 1904, became a trade union leader and belonged to the party's left-wing opposition. Member of the Soldiers' Council during the bourgeois democratic revolution and became the military commander of the troops which joined the revolution. A founder member of the KMP and served as People's Commissar for Defence under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat and worked in the Comintern and Profintern apparatus. Later did scientific work. Returned to Hungary in 1945 and served as Hungary's ambassador in Warsaw from 1948 until he died.

János Szántó Kovács (1852–1908): agricultural worker. Leader of the social democratic agricultural labour movement in Hódmezővásárhely in 1892–4. Arrested in April 1894, when his supporters attempted to free him. Sentenced to five years imprisonment at the trial—which attracted international attention—which followed the “Hódmezővásárhely insurrection”. Continued his labour movement activities after his release, but retired from the leadership.

Ferenc Szeder (1881–1952): agricultural worker. Joined the labour movement in 1896; from 1922 on, he was an MP for several sessions and acted as general secretary of the MSzDP in 1942–4. Became deputy general secretary after 1945 and opposed working class unity. Expelled from the MSzDP in March 1948. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1950. Died in prison.

Béla Székely (1889–1938): office worker. Joined the MSzDP in 1905, the KMP in 1918. Served as People's Commissar for Finance under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated in August 1919 and took part in the reorganization of the KMP. Worked in the foreign trade apparatus of the Soviet Union from 1925 on. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938 and died in prison.

Gyula Székfü (1863–1955): historian, academician. Despite his scholarly conservative work, he became a prominent figure in the anti-fascist forces in the Second World War. Worked as Hungary's ambassador in Moscow in 1946–8. Became an MP in 1953.

Pál Szende (1879–1934): lawyer, politician, social scientist. A founder of the Bourgeois Radical Party in 1914. Served as Minister of Finance during the

bourgeois democratic revolution. Joined the *émigré* social democrat *Világosság* Group in Vienna in 1920.

Imre Szélig (1903–68): locksmith. Joined the MSzDP in 1923 and became its official functionary in 1939. Became member of the top MSzDP leadership in 1945 and eventually its general secretary. An MP. An opponent of working class unity. Expelled from the party in March 1948, after which he left Hungary.

Tibor Szőnyi (1903–49): physician. Joined the KMP in 1930. Lived in exile from the mid-thirties onwards. Returned to Hungary in 1945 and became a leading functionary of the KMP and later the MDP apparatus. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1949, sentenced to death and executed.

József Sztérenyi (1861–1941): journalist, politician. MP in 1906–27 and later member of the Upper Chamber. Served as Under-Secretary of Commerce between 1906 and 1910 and as a minister between January and October 1918.

Döme Sztójay (1883–1946): career army officer, politician. Military attaché between 1927 and 1933 and Hungary's ambassador in Berlin. Served as Prime Minister from the time of the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 until 24 August 1944. Sentenced to death by the People's Tribunal and executed.

Aladár Tamás (1899–): writer. Joined the communist movement in 1920. Became KMP editor of the legal journal 100%—in 1927. Arrested in 1932 and sentenced to three years imprisonment. Lived in exile in 1936–46. Returned to Hungary in 1946 and worked in the field of culture and later in the diplomatic service.

Vilmos Tartsay (1901–44): career army officer, staff captain. Active in the military staff of the resistance movement. Arrested in November 1944, sentenced to death and executed.

István Tariska (1915–): physician. Became member of the Provisional National Assembly in 1944. The MKP's eastern Hungarian secretary in 1945. Worked in health administration from the end of 1945 onwards.

Imre Tarr (1900–1937): railway worker. Joined the communist movement in 1920. Moved to France in the mid-twenties, and became a leader of communist Hungarian exiles. Fought in Spain in 1937 as political commissar of the Hungarian division and fell in battle.

Pál Teleki (1879–1941): landowner, politician. Became an MP in 1905 and took part in counter-revolutionary organization in 1919. Served as a minister in several cabinets after the defeat of the Republic of Councils and as Prime Minister in 1920–1 and in 1939–41. Committed suicide on 3 April 1941 in protest against the act of military aggression committed by Hungary against Yugoslavia.

Zoltán Tildy (1889–1961): Calvinist minister, politician. Took part in the founding of the Independent Smallholders' Party in 1930. MP in 1936–44. Joined the Hungarian Front after the German occupation of Hungary. Became Prime

Minister in autumn 1945 and President of the Republic in 1946–8. Served as Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government in 1956. Sentenced to imprisonment in 1958 and released in 1959.

Antal Tisza (1895–1941): agricultural worker. Joined the KMP at the beginning of 1919 and enlisted into the Red Army under the Republic of Councils. Became a leader of the agricultural workers' federation during the early twenties. From 1927 on, he was arrested on several occasions and tried. Emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1932. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938. Died in prison.

István Tisza (1861–1918): landowner, politician. Became an MP in 1886 and served as Prime Minister in 1903, 1905 and in 1913–7. Shot inside his home by armed soldiers during the 1918 bourgeois democratic revolution for his part in the involvement of Hungary in the war.

Árpád Tóth (1886–1928): poet.

István Tömpe (1909): upholsterer, communist leader. Joined the KMP in 1928. Fought in Spain in 1937–9. Interned in France. Returned to Hungary in 1945 and filled various state and party posts in 1945–62. Became president of Hungarian Radio and Television in 1962.

Jenő Törzs (1887–1946): actor.

Béla Uitz (1888–1972): painter. Participated in the administration of the arts under the Republic of Councils. Emigrated after its defeat. Joined the KMP in 1922. Lived and worked in the Soviet Union in 1926–68.

Elemér Vadász (1885–1970): geologist, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Ágoston Valentin (1888–1958): lawyer. Joined the MSzDP in 1918. Became a leader of the party's Szeged branch between the two world wars and mayor of Szeged after the liberation. Served as Minister of Justice in the Provisional Government in 1944–50. Sentenced to imprisonment on trumped-up charges in 1950–5.

János Vanczák (1870–1932): locksmith. Worked as secretary of the ironworkers' union between 1904–20, edited *Népszava* in 1920–7. Member of the party leadership and the Trade Union Council. MP in 1922–31.

Béla Varga (1903–): Roman Catholic priest, politician. Speaker of Parliament in 1945–7. Left Hungary in 1947.

Jenő (Eugen) Varga (1879–1964): economist. Joined the MSzDP in 1906. Became *Népszava*'s economics correspondent in 1907, a university professor in 1918. Worked as president of the National Economic Council under the Republic of Councils. Took part in the work of the Comintern after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Carried on scholarly work from 1927 until his death in the Soviet Union, where he became the leader of scientific institutions and a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

István Vas (1910–): poet, translator.

Zoltán Vas (1903–83): journalist. Joined the communist youth movement in 1918. Fought in the Red Army under the Republic of Councils and joined the

first Hungarian communist organizations. Became secretary of KIMSz in 1925. Arrested and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Only released in 1940. Lived and worked in the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Became mayor of Budapest in 1945. Held various party and state posts. Member of the KMP and later the MDP Central Leadership in 1945-56.

Mihály Váci (1927-70): poet.

István Vági (1883-1940): carpenter. Joined the organized workers in 1902 and later became a trade union leader. Served as the political commissar under the Republic of Councils. Worked as an MSzDP secretary in several provincial towns during the early twenties and was a leader of left-wing opposition within the party. A founder and chairman of the legal revolutionary party, the MSzMP in 1925, and elected member of the Central Committee at the First Congress of the KMP. Arrested on several occasions, spent seven years in prison, after which he emigrated to the Soviet Union, where he worked in the Profintern apparatus. Arrested on trumped-up charges in 1938. Died in prison.

Béla Vágó (1861-1939): office worker. Joined the working class movement at the turn of the century. A party and trade union leader in 1906-18. A founder member of the KMP. Served as People's Commissar for Home Affairs under the Republic of Councils and as commander of a Red Army corps. Emigrated after the defeat of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Took part in the reorganization of the KMP. Lived and worked in Germany and in the Soviet Union in 1921-33. Victim of the violations of legality in the Soviet Union.

Károly Vántus (1879-1927): carpenter. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War, became secretary of the Hungarian group of the Russian Communist Party in 1918. Served as People's Commissar for Agriculture under the Republic of Councils. Sentenced to death in 1920. Sent to the Soviet Union under the prisoner exchange agreement in 1922.

István Várkonyi (1852-1918): agricultural worker. Joined the labour movement in 1889, became member of the MSzDP leadership in 1896. By organizing and stepping up rural agitation he found himself increasingly in opposition to the MSzDP and was expelled from the party. Formed the Independent Socialist Party in 1897, launched a large-scale peasant movement which was ruthlessly suppressed by the authorities. Várkonyi was imprisoned. Was unable to retrieve his former prominence in the movement after his release.

Albert Váry (1874-1953): lawyer. Head of the Budapest Prosecutors' Office in 1918-9. Worked as Chief Public Prosecutor after the defeat of the Republic of Councils. Government party MP in 1926-39.

Márk Vedres (1870-1961): sculptor.

Péter Veres (1897-1970): agricultural worker, writer. Joined the working class movement in 1913. A leader of the local council in his home village under the Republic of Councils. Imprisoned for his revolutionary activities. Worked in the MSzDP in the twenties and thirties. Became chairman of the

National Peasant Party in 1945. MP from 1945 until his death. Served as a minister in coalition governments between 1947–8.

Tibor Vilt (1905–1983): sculptor.

Fernand Vix (1872–): French lieutenant-colonel. Leader of the Entente Mission in Budapest during the 1918–9 bourgeois democratic revolution.

Manfréd Weiss (1857–1922): industrialist. A leading figure of the Hungarian war industry during the First World War.

Sándor Wekerle (1848–1921): politician. Served as Prime Minister in 1892–5, 1906–19, and 1917–8.

Jakab Weltner (1873–1936): cabinet-maker. Joined the MSzDP in 1894, acted as its secretary between 1898–1905; later became editor of *Népszava*. Member of the united party under the Republic of Councils. Lived in exile in 1919–24. Became the editor of *Népszava* once again after his return to Hungary. MP from 1931 until his death.

Máté Zalka (1896–1937): writer. Was taken prisoner by the Russians in the First World War and fought for Soviet power. Became regiment commander and member of the Russian Communist Party in 1920. Pursued literary and cultural activities after the civil war in the Soviet Union. Under the name of General Lukács served as a division commander in the Spanish Civil War. Died in combat in 1937.

Vilmos Zsinkó (1911–38): locksmith. Joined the KIMSz in 1928, and later the KMP. Became a leader of KIMSz. Died in fight in Spain in 1938.

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 5 |
| <i>The Early History of the Working Class Movement in Hungary. The Activities of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary from 1890 to 1917</i> | 8 |
| The Early History of Capitalism in Hungary | 8 |
| The First Workers' Organizations | 8 |
| The Social Democratic Party of Hungary and its Programme | 12 |
| Workers' Living Conditions and the Working Class Movement in the Early Part of the Twentieth Century | 13 |
| The 1903 Programme of the MSzDP | 15 |
| The Struggle for Universal Suffrage | 17 |
| The MSzDP and the First World War | 19 |
| <i>The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Hungary. Formation and Activities of the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP) up till 21 March 1919</i> | 23 |
| The Maturing of the Revolutionary Situation | 23 |
| The Triumph of the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution | 26 |
| Formation of the Hungarian Party of Communists (KMP) | 31 |
| The Failure of the Bourgeois Government. Hungary on the Eve of the Socialist Revolution | 38 |
| The Communist and Social Democratic Parties Amalgamate: the Victory of the Socialist Revolution | 43 |
| <i>The Hungarian Republic of Councils</i> | 45 |
| Organizing Socialist Construction and Revolutionary Defence | 45 |
| The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Councils | 54 |
| The Revolutionary War. Struggle against Intervention from Abroad and the Enemy at Home | 57 |
| National Meeting of Councils and New Military Offensive by the Allied Powers | 63 |
| The Defeat of the Republic of Councils | 67 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>The Working Class Movement in Hungary during the Horthy Era.</i> | |
| <i>The Struggle against Fascism and the War</i> | 70 |
| Hungary after Two Revolutions | 70 |
| The Working Class | 72 |
| The Legal Working Class Movement in the Twenties..... | 72 |
| The Reorganization of the Communist Party | 76 |
| The Struggle of the Communists in the Legal Workers' Organizations | 78 |
| The Impact of Consolidation on the Working Class Movement..... | 80 |
| The Working Class Movement during the Great Depression | 83 |
| Changes within the Ranks of the Working Class | 86 |
| The Working Class Movement and the Rise of Fascism..... | 88 |
| The Working Class Movement during the War against the Soviet Union | 93 |
| The German Occupation of Hungary | 96 |
| <i>The Liberation of Hungary. The Victory of the Socialist Revolution</i> | 101 |
| The Internal Situation at the Time of the Liberation | 101 |
| Life Restarts..... | 102 |
| The Provisional Government | 103 |
| The Land Reform | 104 |
| Classes and Political Parties | 105 |
| The 1945 Election | 107 |
| The Offensive of the Bourgeoisie | 108 |
| The Left-Wing Bloc | 109 |
| Consolidation | 110 |
| The Paris Peace Treaty | 111 |
| The Third Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party | 112 |
| The Disintegration of the Smallholders' Party | 113 |
| People's Democracy and the Churches | 114 |
| The Three-Year Plan. The 1947 Election | 115 |
| The Start of the Cold War. The Nationalization of the Industry | 118 |
| The Merger of the Two Working Class Parties..... | 120 |
| <i>Socialist Development and its Achievements. Distortions in the</i> | |
| <i>Policy of the Hungarian Working People's Party (1948-1956)</i> .. | 123 |
| The International Situation at the End of the Forties | 123 |
| The Setting up of the Independence Front | 125 |
| The Success of the Three-Year Plan. The Five-Year Plan | 128 |
| The Emergence of the Personality Cult. The Political Trials..... | 129 |
| Achievements and Contradictions..... | 131 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Social Mobility | 133 |
| Everyday Life in the Fifties | 135 |
| The Agricultural Policy of the Hungarian Working People's Party | 138 |
| The June 1953 Resolution of MDP | 139 |
| Half-Hearted Measures | 140 |
| The International Situation in the Fifties | 142 |
| The June 1956 Resolution of the Central Leadership | 143 |
| <i>The Struggle against the Counter-Revolution</i> | |
| <i>Consolidation, Laying the Foundations of Socialism (1956-62) ...</i> | 145 |
| The Counter-Revolutionary Uprising | 145 |
| The Defeat of the Counter-Revolutionary Uprising. The Formation of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government | 151 |
| The Reorganization of the Party | 152 |
| The Nature and Causes of the Counter-Revolution | 154 |
| Consolidation | 157 |
| The June 1957 Conference of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party ... | 160 |
| The Socialist Reorganization of Agriculture..... | 163 |
| The Seventh and Eighth Congresses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party | 166 |
| <i>The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on the Road to Socialism (1962-80)</i> | |
| The International Situation..... | 168 |
| Economic Development | 170 |
| Changes in the Standard of Living | 172 |
| Classes, Strata and Related Interests | 174 |
| Party and Mass Organizations, Democratic Forums of Public Life | 175 |
| Scholarship, Education, Culture | 176 |
| <i>Chronology</i> | 179 |
| <i>List and Abbreviations of Political Parties</i> | 192 |
| <i>Index of Names</i> | 193 |

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How did the history of the Hungarian working-class movement become part of the history of the international labour movement? What debates, conflicts and adversities beset the revolutionary movement of the working class? How were the Hungarian political parties established and what happened to them after 1945? How did the present one-party system come about? For the answers turn to this book, which also carries ample excerpts from documents of the past decades.

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